



# A door opened by the Lord

THE HISTORY OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN KENYA

RUNE IMBERG

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the Evangelical Lutheran Church  
in Kenya

BV-FÖRLAG  
FÖRSAMLINGSFÖRLAGET

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This book is dedicated

... to all the Christians of the  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya,

well known and unknown,  
who have remained in the faith  
entrusted to the saints (Jud. v. 3) –  
even in the perils and turmoil in the recent conflict

and

... to my youngest daughters,

Sara – who is so proud of being born in Kenya  
Maria – who, though born in Sweden, was like a fare well-gift  
from Kenya when my family and I had to leave in 1996.

# **A door opened by the Lord**

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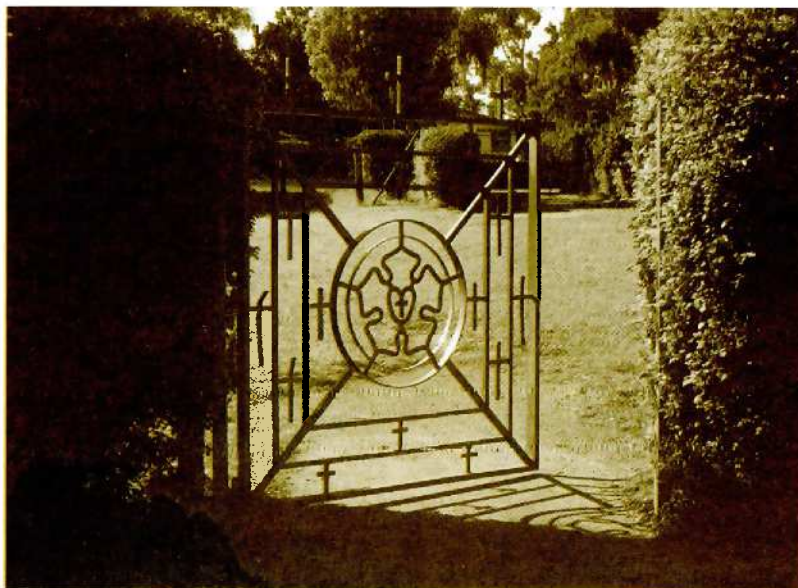
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## ... an open door that no-one can shut

**IN THE BOOK** *Som en brusande flod* (1998), Nils-Göran Nilsson and Roland Gustafsson wrote:

“One of the pioneer missionaries of the Swedish Lutheran Mission (SLM) – Karl Nyström – working in Ethiopia and Eritrea, often used to quote the promise in Revelation 3,8: ‘See, I have placed before you an open door that no-one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.’

In the year 1915, when the first world-war had started affecting the possibilities of continuing mission work, he wrote: ‘I cannot present any evidence, but I have a strong conviction that the Lord is about to give us a large mission-field and that the Gospel will move forward there like a surging river during spring-time ... it is not the expectations of great success that should be the motivation for the work but love for the Lord and his commandment to make disciples of all nations.’”<sup>1</sup>

**KARL NYSTRÖM WAS** for 40 years a pioneer missionary in Eritrea and Ethiopia, from 1893 working for Swedish Evangelical Mission (Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen) and from 1912 for SLM (Missions-sällskapet Bibeltrogna Vänner). His first contact with Africa took place in 1893 when he arrived in Lamu, north of Mombasa. After a short visit to Sweden, he returned to Africa where he lived and worked until 1935. He participated in the Fourth Galla expedition which started in Kenya (see below, p. 43 f.). He died in 1946.

His statements about “an open door” were made especially during the years 1911–13 in connection with the theological conflict which led to the creation of SLM, while the statement about a large mission-field was made in 1915.

The mission friends in Sweden were reminded of these statements when they were quoted some thirty years later in his obituary, printed in 1946. That means they were printed before SLM commenced its mission work in Kenya in 1948.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nils-Göran Nilsson and Roland Gustafsson, in: Gustafsson – Imberg – Wiberg, *Som en brusande flod*, p. 5 (Engl. translation: *Like a Surging River*, p. [2]). – His wife, Agnes Nyström, had similar thoughts in 1916, evi-

dently thinking of Ethiopia (Alazar Menghestu, *Bakgrunden till och framväxten av en luthersk kyrka i Eritrea*, 1911–1932, p. 109, note 24, where a reference is made to BVMT 1916:53).

<sup>2</sup> Nyström arrived in Africa 1893, coming to Lamu north of Mombasa. He returned to Sweden in 1896, where he married his fiancée Agnes. His second period in Africa lasted 39 years, 1896–1935! Cf. BVMT 1946:150f.

## To the reader

IT WAS WITH GRATITUDE that I received the assignment from the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya*, through the Presiding Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Walter Obare Omwanza, and the General Secretary, Rev. John Halakhe, to write its history.

I hope that this book will be received as a gift from me and my family, and also from the Swedish Lutheran Mission (ELM-BV), in connection with the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ELCK later this year!

AT THE END OF THIS BOOK, I will express my gratitude to persons and organizations that have assisted me when I have been writing it. I am very grateful for this assistance which has been made in a number of different ways and over many years.

Here I would like to inform the readers about the character of this book, and even point to different elements of strength and (unfortunately!) weakness which are to be found.

THE READER MUST REMEMBER that this assignment was given to a person who is Swedish – is a pastor – is a Church historian – has worked as a missionary in Kenya – who normally lives in Sweden – who grew up in Kenya as a *missionary kid*.

To start with, I am a *Swede*, even if I was born in Zimbabwe to parents who served as missionaries there. Although I have lived more than ten years in Kenya, I am not a Kenyan. I do not have *Swahili*, *Ekegusii* or a similar language as my mother tongue. In some ways that is a problem for a study of this kind, but in other ways it is beneficial. Swedish is my mother tongue. That means that I can easily read sources connected not only with the *early history of ELCK*, but even with the *pre-history*. Many such documents are only found in Swedish libraries and archives.

I have served as a pastor in both Kenya and Sweden. In this book I will deal with many issues related to the *identity* and *theological development* of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. Unfortunately some other aspects of the work in the Church are less treated, e.g. the work undertaken in the schools and clinics, media ministry, etc.

As a trained *Church historian* I need to work with what is called “source criticism”: How to find good and reliable sources, to analyse their context, etc. In a book of this kind it is very important to trace reliable sources and compare them with each other.

As I have done most of this work while living in Sweden, I have put a special stress on *written sources*. When working in *Kenya* (during our visit in 2006-07, but also previously, in earlier research) I have tried to locate and use important documents belonging to ELCK, especially those found at Itierio and MLTC. I have also talked with many Kenyan Christians about their experiences and memories. Back in *Sweden* I have used a number of written sources found either in the SLM Archives or in public libraries. In that way I have made it easier for future researchers to scrutinize my work and if necessary “retrace” most of the steps taken by me. *The source situation has also forced me to concentrate on the development up to 1968*. I especially hope that future researchers will be more able to utilize *oral sources* when working with research related to the history of ELCK. – Concerning my historical method: In this study I have relied mainly on *written sources*; I have then checked the result with *oral interviews* and a large number of *conversations* (while in Kenya) and a couple of *seminars*, one at MLTC in March 2007 and another one in Oslo, Norway, in October 2007.

I have lived for many years in Kenya, first as a *missionary kid* with my parents, Josef and Judith Imberg (1965–71), and later as a *missionary* together with my wife Katrina and our family, 1990–96. As a missionary it was a privilege for me to work together with the Lutheran Christians in Kenya in different capacities. Part time, beside my teaching duties at MLTC, I assisted in the pastoral ministry, especially in the Matongo and Kenyoro-Erandi area. (I and my family have many wonderful memories from that time!) It was also possible for me to make a number of journeys, often with my family and at other occasions with some of my students. The only major area of ELCK which I have never visited is Samburu. Otherwise, I have seen most of the districts where the Church was active up to the middle of the 1990's.

**FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS** I have been able to follow the development of the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya*. I have known most of the persons who will appear by name in this study: Many of them have been my friends and colleagues, some of them have even been my students.

It has really been a joy for me to work with this book. It is with deep gratitude both to God and to a number of persons – some of them dead, many of them still active in the service of the Lord – that I end this work for now.

**LET ME HERE JUST MENTION** four persons who have made a great impression on me and who passed away to the Lord while I was working with this book.

- Last year *Rev. Jeftha Michoro* died at high age, for many years being “my” pastor at Matongo. He will always be remembered as the one who brought

the Lutheran mission to that area. But he also left an important legacy in his evangelistic work, in an uncommon but successful way crossing tribal borders.

- Recently one of my previous students, *Ev. Charles Gwaro*, died after a time of sickness. Since I learnt to know him in 1990–91, he always made a strong impression on me with his sincerity, his radiant smile and his depth.

- A few weeks ago, *Bojan (Pettersson) Löwgren* died after a long time of sickness. She was the first nurse at the Matongo clinic and as everyone knows who has met her: a woman with a big smile and a warm heart.

- Early in February this year, my dear mother, *Judith Imberg*, left us after a short period of sickness. She was one of those many women who love the Lord and quietly spend a whole life serving him.

**MY HOPE AND WISH** is that everyone who reads this book will see, from his or her own perspective, in what wonderful way God does his work among us humans!

*Mungu awe nanyi daima  
hata tuonane tena  
awachunge kwa neema.  
Mungu awe nanyi daima.*

(MWIMBIENI BWANA, 195)

“GOD BE WITH YOU TILL WE MEET AGAIN”, SWAHILI

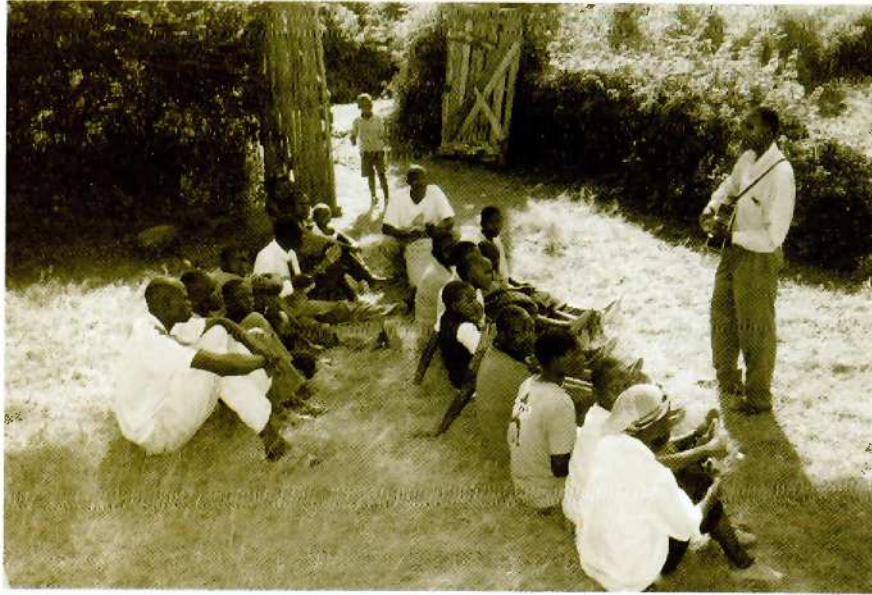
Horred, Sweden, May 8, 2008  
Rune Imberg



## Abbreviations and special expressions

Abbreviations of archives and book titles are found in the chapter *Sources and literature*

<b>AGM</b>	Annual General Meeting – the highest deciding body within LCK/ ELCK	<b>LCBTFK</b>	Lutheran Church, Bibletrue Friends in Kenya – the official name of ELCK 1959–1963
<b>BTF</b>	Bibletrue friends – cf. BV / SLM / ELM-BV	<b>LEAF</b>	Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland – cf. SLEY
<b>BV</b>	<i>Bibeltrogna Vänner</i> (Swe.) – today called ELM-BV; cf. SLM	<b>LWF</b>	Lutheran World Federation
<b>CMS</b>	Church Missionary Society – an Anglican mission body	<b>MBV</b>	<i>Missionssällskapet Bibeltrogna Vänner</i> – cf. BV, ELM-BV (Swe.), SLM (Engl.)
<b>DC</b>	District Commissioner	<b>MBS</b>	Matongo Bible School
<b>D/L</b>	District Leader – one of the senior pastors within ELCK	<b>Mch.</b>	(Swa.) <i>Mchungaji</i> : Pastor, "Rev."
<b>EFS</b>	<i>Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen</i> (Swe.) – cf. SEM	<b>MLTC</b>	Matongo Lutheran Theological College
<b>ELCK</b>	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya – the official name since 1978	<b>NCCK</b>	National Christian Council of Kenya
<b>ELCT</b>	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (Tanganyika)	<b>NLM</b>	Norwegian Lutheran Mission; <i>Norsk Luthersk Missionssamband</i> (Norw.)
<b>ELM-BV</b>	<i>Evangelisk-Luthersk Mission – Bibel- trogna Vänner</i> (Swe.) – today the official Swedish name of SLM	<b>P/L</b>	Parish leader – normally one of the pastors within ELCK
<b>Ev.</b>	<i>Evangelist</i>	<b>SEM</b>	Swedish Evangelical Mission – cf. EFS
<b>Ex. Comm.</b>	the Executive Committee – the highest executive body within ELCK	<b>SLEAF</b>	Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland – cf. SLEF
<b>Galla</b>	a word not in use today, indicating tribe or language: Oromo	<b>SLEF</b>	<i>Svenska Lutherska Evangeliföreningen i Finland</i> (Swe.) – cf. SLEAF
<b>Halmashauri Kuu</b>	(Swa.) – the Annual General Meeting of ELCK, cf. AGM	<b>SLEY</b>	<i>Suomen Luterilainen Evankeliumiyhdistys</i> (Finn.) – cf. LEAF
<b>H/O</b>	Head Office	<b>SLM</b>	Swedish Lutheran Mission – cf. BV / MBV / ELM-BV
<b>Kamati Kuu</b>	(Swa.) – the Executive Committee of ELCK	<b>Swa.</b>	Swahili
<b>Kavirondo</b>	a word not in use today, indicating area, tribe or language: cf. the Nyanza area and Winam Gulf (geogr.) / Luo (tribe) / Dholuo (language) etc.	<b>Swe.</b>	Swedish
<b>LCK</b>	Lutheran Church of Kenya – the official name of ELCK 1963–1978	<b>Synod</b>	today: a spiritual meeting within ELCK; previously: a kind of AGM (Swa.): District
		<b>W/PL</b>	World Mission Prayer League
		<b>W/P</b>	West Pokot



## Prologue

Rigereria, ninteneine gesieri gotura; omonto karaigwe  
eriogi riane na koigora egesieri, ninsoe asare, nindagere  
amo nere, na ere amo nainche. (REV. 3:20, EKEGUSII [KISI])

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears  
my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and  
eat with him, and he with me. (REV. 3:20, RSV)

*What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!  
 What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer!  
 Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear  
 – All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer.*

HYMN SUNG BY MARTIN AND GUNBORG LUNDSTRÖM AT SUNEKA MARKET IN 1948<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Suneka market, July 1948: The work begins...

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT dates in the history of the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya* is the last Sunday of July 1948.

On that very day, July 25<sup>th</sup>, the Swedish missionary Martin Lundström together with his wife Gunborg walked down the hill from Itierio to Suneka market. Just a few weeks earlier they had moved from Kisii town in South Western Kenya to Itierio. They had been sent from Sweden to build up a mission station there.

What happened at Suneka is described in a contemporary report in the following way:

We started preaching on the Sunday of the 25<sup>th</sup> of July. We still have no building in which to gather, but we go down to the local market-place, where every Sunday hundreds of people gather to buy or sell their products. We choose a small place on a somewhat higher altitude or under a shady tree and try from there to teach them about the way of salvation. We do not lack audience. Last Sunday there were probably some two hundreds listening to the Word.

Especially the numerous young people seem quite interested.

On that first Sunday I talked over the words in



Martin & Gunborg Lundström visiting Itierio in March 1948.



Gunborg Lundström on the Itierio plot, early in 1948.

<sup>1</sup> *Sankey's Sacred Songs & Solos*, No. 319. It seems they sang it in *Ekegusii: Yeso nomo-sani oito* (No. 57 in *Ogotera Kw'Egekristo*); information from Martin Lundström in *BVMT* 1948:130 (where he also stated that they sang *Nearer, My God, to Thee!*)

<sup>2</sup> Information by Lundström in a private letter to the SLM Chairman, Axel B. Svensson. It was immediately printed in the mission pa-

per (*BVMT* 1948:130; later quoted in Gustafsson – Imberg – Wiberg, *Som en brusande flod*, p. 7 [*Like a Surging River*, p. 3]). In a later description of the event, Lundström added: "It was really good, yes, wonderful, to preach in Swahili and see that they could understand something. Some of them nodded with agreement and someone answered automatically during the sermon, *ee*, or

*ebano*. It means yes, yes... Next Sunday we had to return. But then we were to stand on some higher spot in the middle of the market and not, as in the first time, in a corner of it." The sermon was translated by Klement Nyandara to *Ekegusii*. One hymn, *Jesus för världen*, was sung in Swedish. (Martin Lundström, *Afrikaminnen. Sjutton år i Kenya*, p. 82 f)



Rev. 3,20, and we sang “Jesus has given his life for the world” and a few verses from the hymn, “The Lord is standing, knocking at the door of your heart...”

I have succeeded in translating both songs into Swahili. Last Sunday we sang, “What a friend we have in Jesus”, and, “Nearer my God to thee.”<sup>2</sup>

**IN THIS WAY MARTIN LUNDSTRÖM** and his wife Gunborg commenced their ministry in the Kisii area in 1948. It seems that they continued in this way at Suneka for a long time, until they were able to start with regular work in the mission station premises.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. and Mrs. Lundström were sent out by the mission body *Swedish Lutheran Mission* (in Swedish: *Missionssällskapet Bibeltrogna Vänner*<sup>4</sup>) as pioneer workers in Kenya, where they remained until 1964. After some years they moved to Matongo and then to Nairobi. Later in 1948 they were joined by Enok and Magda Salomonsson who worked in Kenya up to 1952.

Out of this pioneer ministry grew a small Church which had a few thousand members when it became independent in 1963. It is now found in many parts of Kenya and is well known over the world as the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya*. It has appr. 100 000 members, more than one hundred pastors, and is led by the Presiding Bishop Walter Obare Omwanza.

**IN THIS STUDY WE WILL** mainly try to answer the following questions:

- How does it come that Swedish Lutheran Mission decided to start a new mission field in Kenya?

- How has the work developed over the 60 years since 1948, from a tiny mission work to an independent Church with four dioceses?

There is also another issue which is of special interest and importance in this study:

- What are the important *deliberations* and *decisions*, mostly made by the indigenous Christians



Ev. Peter Nyangweso at Suneka market (appr. 1996)

but originally also to a large extent by missionaries and mission societies, which have *influenced the development* of ELCK?<sup>5</sup>

These are the three issues which will dominate in this study. The first ones will deal especially with more historical aspects, the third with the theological development.

**IT IS NATURAL TO ASK** the question: *when does the history of ELCK start?* Several good answers can be given:<sup>6</sup>

- On *February 27, 1939*, when the inhabitants in Wanjare / Bonchari location outside Kisii town decided to welcome Swedish Lutheran missionaries to Itierio

- On *Sept. 14, 1947*, when Martin and Gunborg

<sup>3</sup> BVMT 1948:141. Ev. Metusela Magoka states that Lundström was preaching at Suneka market for a long time (*interview* with M.M., Itierio, Dec. 2006), a statement which is confirmed by BVMBV 1949:45.

<sup>4</sup> Concerning abbreviations used in this book, see p. 13

<sup>5</sup> This aspect is important when we study the general development of ELCK, but even more so when we analyse the *theological* stand and development of ELCK, e. g.: when the Bible School started at Matongo in 1957, when the Nairobi work started in 1962, when areas of concentration were

created in the late 1960's, when the office of Bishop was introduced in 1996. We will come back to these events!

<sup>6</sup> These events will be described in detail later on in this study

Lundström were blessed in Taveljö Church in Sweden before being sent by SLM for service in Kenya

- On *July 25, 1948*, when Martin Lundström held his first sermon at Suneka market, outside of Itierio station

WHATEVER DATE WE WANT to stress – 1939, 1947 or 1948 – we cannot explain the events taking place without considering the previous mission history, especially the mission visions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In order to understand why Swedish Lutheran

Mission started its work in Kenya, and why the missionaries came to the *Abagusii* and not to some other tribe in Kenya,<sup>7</sup> we need to go back in time. The early mission work undertaken by SLM, and the decisions made by the Mission Board in Stockholm, can only be understood if we have first dealt with three important historical events:

- The first mission work undertaken in Kenya
- The work of Dr. J. L. Krapf in Eastern and North Eastern Africa, and especially his visions
- The early mission work of SLM in Africa

---

<sup>7</sup> I will in general try to follow the nomenclature normally used in Kenya today, except

when quoting old sources. People belonging to the “Kisii tribe” call themselves *Abagusii*,

they speak *Ekegusii*, but their main centre is called *Kisii* [town].



## I.

### GENERAL BACKGROUND

# Mission work in Kenya and Eastern Africa

After going through Pisidia, they [Paul and Barnabas] came into Pamphylia, and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and *how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles*. And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

ACTS 14:24 FF, NIV; MY ITALICS





Dr. Krapf

*As for me, I must say, the best and most faithful intercessors I have met learned the holy art of intercession only after many trials or great suffering.*

DR. OLE HALLESBY ON INTERCESSORY PRAYER<sup>1</sup>

## 2. A man with a vision – J. L. Krapf

IN HIS FAMOUS BOOK *Prayer*, the Norwegian theologian, Dr. Ole Hallesby has written about intercessory prayer, and its power. He states that the real reason behind great revivals often is intercessory prayer:

You may have prayed for some unconverted people in your neighbourhood, perhaps for many years. Then a revival starts in your neighbourhood, and the first ones to be converted are the very ones for whom you have been praying so faithfully. No-one besides yourself, however, knows anything about that. You have kept it, as is right and proper, a secret between yourself and God. Consequently, no-one talks about what you have been doing. But the name of the preacher who has spoken at the meetings is, on the other hand, on everybody's lips.<sup>2</sup>

When we study the history of the Christian Churches all over the world we must recognize these truths. There are many important historical and material facts which need to be described and analysed. It is, however, also important to be looking for the deeper, spiritual explanations.

Later on in his book, Dr. Hallesby makes a comparison between these “intercessors” and power plants. In connection with that comparison he writes something which is very relevant when we try to analyse the development and expansion of Christianity in Africa:

As for me, I must say, the best and most faithful intercessors I have met learned the holy art of intercession only after many trials or great suffering. All that some of them could do at last was to lie in bed, scarcely able to whisk a fly away from their faces... But how they could pray! Though they lay unseen by men, nevertheless they were centres of spiritual power, and by their simple and persevering prayers they were the chief supporters of the Christian work which was being done in their neighbourhood, their

<sup>1</sup> For the context of the quotation, cf. note 3, below

<sup>2</sup> Ole Hallesby, *Prayer*, 1984, p. 133

community, their country, and even to the ends of the earth. Every time I meet one of these unseen intercessors I am reminded of a great electric power plant. They, too, are often hidden away in some secluded valley. But they are, nevertheless, exceedingly important, a fact which we especially become aware of when they do not function.<sup>3</sup>

IN 1881, TWO GREAT missionary pioneers died in Europe. During their lifetime they hardly got the public recognition they deserved, even if they were rather well known. Today they are, to a large extent, forgotten. They had, however, been like “great electric power plants” in their time, and the legacy from them can be discerned even today in many Christian Churches in Africa, especially in the eastern parts.

One of them was the Swedish missionary Rev. Dr. *Peter Fjellstedt*, the leading man of the mission revival in Sweden in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The other one was his German friend Rev. Dr. *J. L. Krapf* – one of the most influential missionaries of all ages.

When Krapf died, a few months after his friend Peter Fjellstedt,<sup>4</sup> after a life filled with setbacks and problems and with a broken health, nobody could consider his life a tremendous success. He had received certain public recognition when rather young,<sup>5</sup> but gradually the public lost interest in him.<sup>6</sup> As a missionary, he baptised just a few converts, and then he returned home to Germany with a broken health, while his private life was full of sorrows.<sup>7</sup>

His activities are well known, but they have, to a large extent, been interpreted mostly as failures:

... After a frustrating six years in Abyssinia [Ethiopia] from which he was finally expelled, he transferred to Mombasa in 1844. Here he laid his wife and newly born child in “a lonely missionary grave.” He took a house in Mombasa and studied Swahili, into which he translated the NT, and produced a standard dictionary and grammar. In 1846 he was joined by a fellow German Lutheran, Johannes Rebmann, and they moved to Rabai, about ten miles inland from Mombasa, to work among the Wanyika. From here he and Rebmann went on several important journeys of exploration inland... in 1853 [he] had to return to Europe due to ill-health. He maintained his interest in Africa and continued important linguistic work...<sup>8</sup>

A still more critical assessment is given by Dr. David B. Barrett:

K’s [Krapf’s] greatest achievements were probably linguistic. As well as his pioneer work in Kiswahili he published a *Vocabulary of Six Languages* and translated Mark’s Gospel into Kikamba.<sup>9</sup>

Bishop Stephen Neill, the famous missiologist, summarizes the work of Krapf and his fellow-missionaries in the following way:

Very little was achieved in these early years... Their work was limited to the learning of Swahili and the translation of the New Testament into it, the care of the occasional convert – and waiting for a better day.<sup>10</sup>

3 Hallesby, ib., p. 134 f

4 Fjellstedt died on Jan. 4, 1881, in Sweden, Krapf the night between Nov. 26 and Nov. 27, 1881, in Germany

5 When he was 32 years old, the Tübingen University made him an honorary Ph.D. because of his literary activities in Ethiopia, collecting rare manuscripts. During a visit to Europe, he also met some persons belonging to the royal families in England and Germany; *ADB* 17:50 ff. But after a while the public lost interest in him; he was too interested in mission work and too little in social life.

6 Surprisingly, there are very few biographies about him. The most well known, by Claus, was published in 1882. I have recently understood two other biographies exist: One

was written by Paul E. Kretzmann in 1907: *John Ludwig Krapf*. Of more interest is a book published in German (2006) and dealing especially with his later activities in Germany: Jochen Eber, *Johann Ludwig Krapf*. – I have not been able to get access to these later two.

7 Krapf was married three times. His first wife, Rosina, died in July 1844, after just two years of marriage, a few days later followed by their newborn child. With his second wife Wilhelmine he had a daughter. When Wilhelmine had died he married Nanette, his third wife, in 1869. – Considering the importance of Krapf, it is surprising to note that a modern German national biography is unable to give the year of his second marriage, as well as the name of

his daughter! Cf. *NDB*, 12:676 and *ADB*, 17:50 ff.

8 John Wilkinson in J.D. Douglas (ed.): *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 572; cf. Hans Jürgen Rieckenberg in *NDB*, 12:677

9 Surprisingly, this assessment is not given by an outsider, but by an Anglican who himself has worked and lived for many years in Kenya: David B. Barrett (in: Stephen Neill – Gerald H. Anderson – John Goodwin (ed.): *Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission*, p. 329)

10 Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, p. 317



Matongo Church 1996

**THESE MEN HAVE MADE** a serious mistake when evaluating the work of Krapf: They have studied the work he undertook in Ethiopia and in the Mombasa area, and recognized his lack of *imminent success*. But they forgot two facts:

Krapf was a *pioneer*. This means that many other missionaries and Christians have walked in his footsteps and reaped the fruit of his work.

His *visions* make him even more important. These visions influenced a lot of people in Europe, especially mission leaders; that is why he is one of the most influential missionaries ever to have walked on African soil.<sup>11</sup>

**ONE OF HIS VISIONS** was to reach the *Galla* people (nowadays mostly called *Oromo*) in Ethiopia with the Gospel. In order to reach that goal, he could suffer almost anything, because he was convinced that this vision came from God. During the work he undertook, and the suffering which followed, he laid the foundation of much of the mission work which was to follow.

Out of that mission work a number of Churches

in Africa have developed, especially the Anglican Churches in Kenya and Uganda. He also influenced the development of many other churches, among them the Mekane Yesus Church in Ethiopia, and indirectly also the Lutheran Church in Ethiopia as well as ELCK!

We will notice that his work in Africa, together with his efforts in Europe, singles him out as one of God's *power plants*, partly explaining why there are so many Christians (Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, perhaps even Roman Catholics) today in Eastern and Northeastern Africa.

**IN 1844, SAID SULTAN**, the Moslem ruler of Zanzibar, made an interesting as well as very fitting statement about Krapf when writing a recommendation letter on his behalf:

This comes from Said Sultan, to all our subjects, friends, and governors, our greeting. This Note is given in favour of Dr. Krapf, the German, a good man, who desires to convert the world to God. Behave ye well to him, and render him services everywhere...<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that Bengt Sundkler is one of the few scholars to have understood the importance of Krapf. Bengt Sundkler – Christopher Stead, *A History of*

*the Church in Africa*, p. 510, 517 ff

<sup>12</sup> Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa*, II:97



Today many men and women, all over Eastern and Northeastern Africa, reap the fruits of the work that Krapf and many together with him toiled with.<sup>13</sup> It can hardly, then, be a surprise to find that he was described, especially by his fellow workers, as a man of prayers.<sup>14</sup>

It is also interesting to note how he died: On the last Saturday evening in November 1881, he had been working with proof reading after which he led a “strong” evening devotion together with his family and friends before wishing them good night. When he didn’t turn up for breakfast the following morning, which happened to be the first Sunday in Advent, they found him dead.

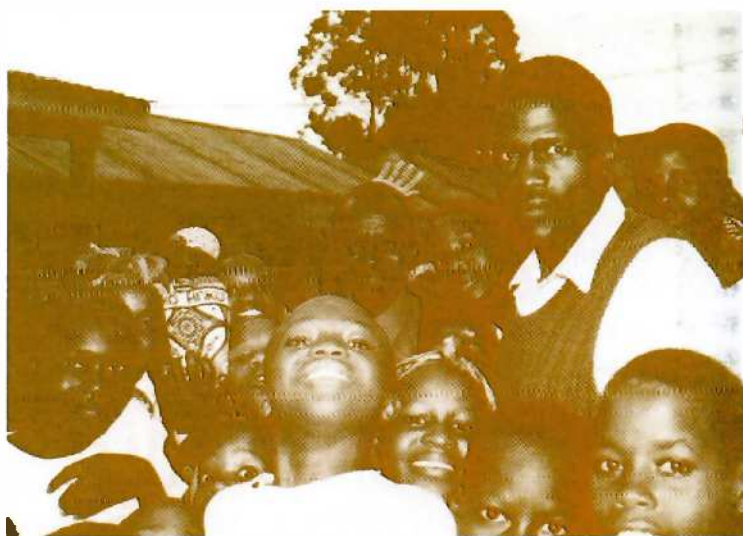
Dr. Krapf – *the German, a good man, who desired to convert the world to God* – was found kneeling, leaning against his bed. In fact, he died in exactly the same position as Dr. Livingstone did some 8 years earlier.

In both cases, the exact *date* of death is unknown, because they died by night.<sup>15</sup> But we know *how* they died: Both of them died on their knees, while praying!<sup>16</sup>

**KRAPF IS DEFINITELY** the most important of all the Christian missionaries who have worked in Kenya – but he wasn’t the one who brought Christianity to the Eastern part of Africa.

**IN ORDER TO FIND** the real background of Christianity in Kenya, we have to go several hundred years back in time. After all, when Krapf came to Mombasa in 1844, one of the first things he saw was a ruin called *Fort Jesus*.

Let us go back a few hundred years and study the first mission enterprise in Kenya. But before we do that, we also have to define: What do we, in fact, mean when we say *Kenya*?



Christianity in Kenya today – a fruit of many prayers

Dressed for joy

<sup>13</sup> This is evident from the map made by Krapf in his book *Reisen in Ostafrika ausgeführt in den Jahren 1837-1855*. There he, as the first European ever, identified a great number of the tribes found in Kenya and other countries, where later mission work has taken place: Maasai, Samburu,

Kikuyu, Ndorobo – and even Tutsi!

<sup>14</sup> He was described as a man of *deeds and prayers* (*ein Mann der That und des Gebets*, Germ.), ADB, vol. 17:55

<sup>15</sup> Dr. Krapf died Nov. 26 or 27, 1881, while the death date of Livingstone often is given as May 1, 1873

<sup>16</sup> Concerning the death of Dr. Krapf, cf. ADB, 17:55 and NDB, 12:676, concerning the death of Dr. Livingstone, see Jonathan Hildebrandt, *History of the Church in Africa*, p. 118

*Those who sow in tears / will reap with songs of joy.  
He who goes out weeping, / carrying seed to sow,  
will return with songs of joy, / carrying sheaves with him.*

PSALM 126:5 (NIV)

### 3. Christianity comes to Kenya. The martyr factor, 1498–1730

**LET US START THIS SECTION**, which deals with the origin of Christianity in Kenya, by asking a basic but very important question: *When did Christianity first come to Kenya?*

The question when Christianity first came to Kenya may look simple, but in fact there are two problems hidden within it, one historical and one geographical:

- We can fairly easily state when the first *Christian congregations* came into existence in Kenya. That happened in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Portugal established naval bases along the Kenyan coast; we will presently return to this issue. But there might also have been some Christians in Kenya before that, coming from Ethiopia, Arabia or even from India.<sup>1</sup> If there has been a *Christian presence* in Kenya before the Portuguese, it is likely that it mostly consisted of some scattered individuals. *There is no proof of any kind of Christian congregation before those established by Portuguese priests along the coast of Kenya in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.*<sup>2</sup> When we want to study the first Christian mission work in Kenya we have, thus, to start with the work undertaken by Roman Catholic priests.

- The second problem is important though perhaps a bit surprising. It can be summarized in the following way: *What do we mean by “Kenya”?*

**LET US, THEREFORE**, proceed in this way: Before studying the work started by Swedish Lutheran Mission in Kenya, we will try to

- clarify some historical and geographical facts concerning Kenya as a country
- study the early Christian (Roman Catholic) presence in East Africa
- analyse some effects of the pioneer work undertaken in Kenya

#### **Kenya as a geographical entity. Some basic facts**

The plains and mountains and rivers of Kenya have, of course, existed as long as the earth has existed in its present shape. *Kenya as a country* has, however, only existed since July 1, 1895, when a certain geographical area was declared as *British East Africa Protectorate*.<sup>3</sup> In 1920 its status was changed into *Kenya Colony and Protectorate*; one of many consequences was that a number of white settlers entered the country. After a long and partly violent political struggle, Kenya be-

1 Concerning the early travels to the Coast of East Africa from Persia, India, Egypt, Israel and Arabia, see L. W. Hollingsworth, *A Short History of the East Coast of Africa*, 9 ff

2 Most books dealing with the early Church history of Kenya start either with the work of Krapf (in the 1840's) or with the Portuguese priests, appr. 1500. Not even John Baur, with his interest in stressing the early origin of Christianity in Africa, mentions any pre-Portuguese Christian presence in

his book *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, p. 87; cf. L. W. Hollingsworth, *A Short History of the East Coast of Africa*, 143 ff. In another book, however, Baur makes a vague statement about some monks visiting the Coast of Kenya (Baur, *The Catholic Church in Kenya*, p. 15), while Latourette mentions the possibility of Nestorian or Jacobite Christians having come to East Africa as merchants (K. S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol. 5, p. 409 f). – In Sweden, to take a Eu-

ropean example, it is well known that the first *mission work* started appr. 830 A.D., but today it is evident that there has been a *Christian presence* in the country since the 6<sup>th</sup> century (Bertil Nilsson, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria*. 1, p. 35 f).

3 Concerning the development before and after 1895, as well as an outline of the history of Kenya up to the modern era, see W. R. Ochieng', *A History of Kenya*, and Ochieng' (ed.), *A Modern History of Kenya 1895–1980*



came an *independent nation* in Dec. 1963 under the leadership of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and a republic in June 1964.

This is not the place to analyse the history of Kenya as such, or the social development within the country during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are many studies dealing with the political and social issues of Kenya in the pre-colonial, colonial and independent era.

It is, however, relevant here to note that the relationship between the colonial authorities on the one hand and the missions and missionaries on the other often was rather complicated.<sup>4</sup> This is true when considering both the general level and the interaction between individuals.<sup>5</sup>

What we cannot neglect, when dealing with the historical background of ELCK, is the fact that several border revisions were made during the colonial era.<sup>6</sup> All of these revisions are very important. They are, in fact, so important that it is surprising that they often have been neglected in studies of East African Church history.

The revisions are the following:

- The original 1895 border between Uganda and Kenya divided Lake Rudolf (Turkana), going rather straight south to the Tanganyika border in a zigzag way. In 1902 Kavirondo (Nyanza) and

part of the Naivasha area were transferred from Uganda to Kenya.<sup>7</sup> – In present day terms: Nyanza and Western provinces, together with a big part of Rift Valley province, were moved to Kenya.

- In 1925, Jubaland was transferred from Kenya to Italian Somaliland

- In 1926, the Rudolf Province was transferred from Uganda to Kenya

FROM A CHRISTIAN POINT of view, all of these revisions have had important consequences:

The border revision in 1902 has influenced the whole religious structure of Kenya. Perhaps half of the Christians in Kenya today live in an area which at an early stage belonged to – Uganda! Towns and cities like Kisumu,<sup>8</sup> Kapenguria, Kitale, Eldoret, Homa Bay and Kisii have an early Ugandan background. We can only guess what the Church history of Kenya and Uganda in the 20<sup>th</sup> century would have looked like, if this revision hadn't been made!<sup>9</sup>

As a consequence, the tribal mixture in both Kenya and Uganda, has been drastically affected. Tribes like the Luo, Kisii, Pokot and Luhya – all of them important in the history of ELCK but also in several other Churches, and today predominantly Christian – were added to the population of Kenya instead of remaining within Uganda.<sup>10</sup>

4 An interesting study dealing with mission and colonialism in general is Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*. Concerning the situation in Kenya he writes: "The relationship between missions and the colonial state in Kenya was far from being one of unambiguous harmony. Missionaries suspected the colonial administration of being half-hearted in its commitment to distinctively Christian objectives, and too inclined to yield to settler pressure – and their suspicions were well-founded. Colonial officials distrusted missionaries as purveyors of dangerously egalitarian doctrines which threatened the basis of white supremacy... Such fears may have contributed to the apparent British policy of giving Muslims preferential employment in the police, the King's African Rifles, and personal service to government officials. (Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, p. 153)

5 Two examples of this complex relationship: One consequence of the colonial influence, both British rule of East Africa up to the 1960's and German rule of Tanganyika up

to 1918, is that colonial policy eased not only the spreading of the Swahili language but also of – Islam! (Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*, p. 406; Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa*, p. 202 ff; Michael Tidy, *A History of Africa, 1840-1914*, vol. Two, p. 172, 179.) – Personal preferences of individual administrators often had a big impact in the mission work. The early SLM missionaries regularly complained of "Catholic intrigues" in the Kisii area; in one book, Lundström devotes a full chapter to that issue (Martin Lundström, *Afrikaminnen – 17 år i Kenya*, p. 98 ff).

6 Concerning the border revisions, see the illuminating map section in David B. Barrett et. al. (ed.), *Kenya Churches Handbook*, especially maps 1-3 (p. 212 ff); cf. W. R. Ochieng' (ed.), *A History of Kenya*, p. 89. – I am grateful to Erling Lundeb, who made me aware of the importance of the border revision in 1926.

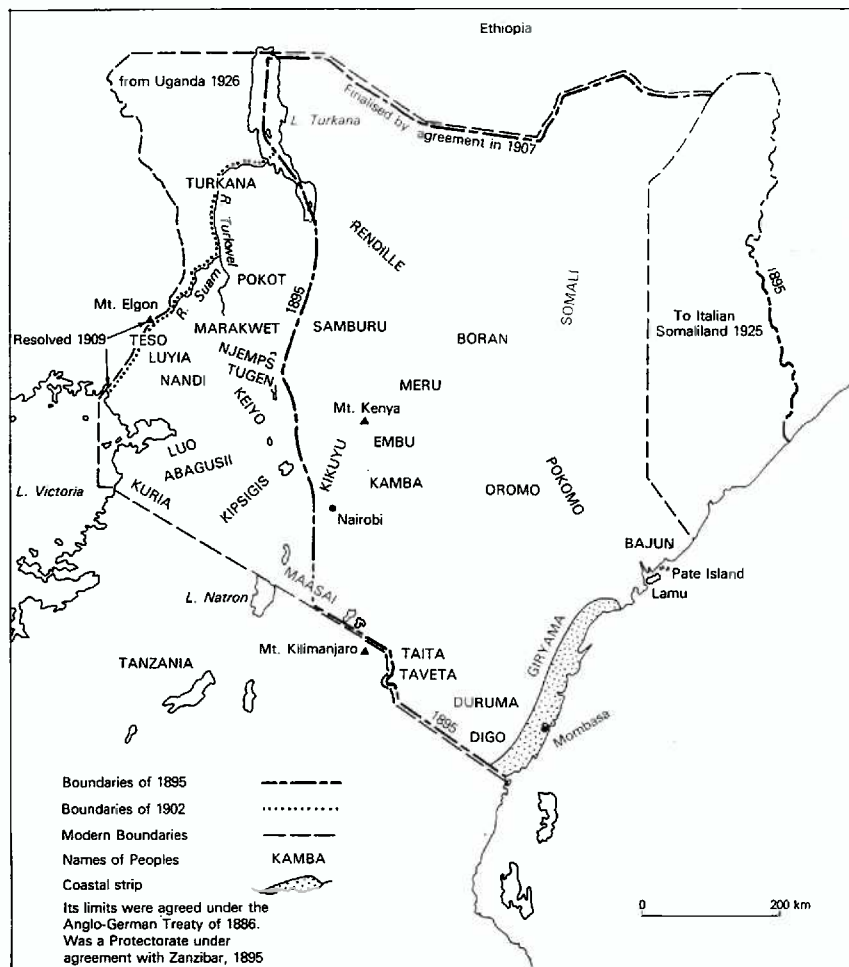
7 The towns and cities that now are known as South Horr, Maralal, Nyahururu

(Thomson's Falls), Nairobi and Kajiado are located quite close to the early Ugandan border, while Naivasha was a border town. – David B. Barrett et. al. (ed.), *Kenya Churches Handbook*, p. 212

8 One reason for the border revision seems to have been the *Uganda railway* between Mombasa and Kisumu. It was impractical to have it administered by two separate colonial authorities; the border revision took place shortly after the railway had been completed; Michael Tidy, *A History of Africa, 1840-1914*, vol. Two, p. 156 ff.

9 For the Anglican Church of Kenya, this fact has special relevance. It was not until 1920 that the "Kavirondo" part of the Anglican/CMS mission work was transferred from the "diocese of Uganda" to the "diocese of Mombasa"; see *Rabai to Mumias*, p. 21.

10 In 1972 all major tribes in Kenya had a Christian majority: Luhya (94 % Christians), Luo (89 %), Gusii/Kisii (82 %), Kikuyu (77 %), Kamba (61 %); figures from David B. Barrett (ed.), *World Christian Encyclopedia*, p. 434



Kenyan peoples and boundaries

Consequently, this border revision has had a dramatic influence on the religious balance between the Christian and the Moslem populations in Kenya. Several of the tribes that were “transferred” to Kenya have today, to a large extent, received Christianity, while Islam, on the other hand, has received only a marginal number of converts in this area. Without this border revision, it is likely that Kenya today would have had a stronger Moslem influence and a weaker Christian presence, more like the situation in Tanzania. The situation in Kenya today, however, resembles the one in Uganda: a strong dominance of Christian Churches and a rather weak Moslem minority.<sup>11</sup>

THE SECOND BORDER revision is, from a general Christian point of view, rather tragic:

In 1925, Jubaland was transferred from Kenya to the Italian colony in Somalia. As we will see, this meant that one of the few promising pioneer Christian missions ever to reach the Somali people with the Gospel, soon was to be closed.<sup>12</sup>

THE THIRD BORDER revision has made the ELCK work in the West Pokot area easier. Previously the area was rather unsafe because of cattle rustling. The border revision made the area more safe to travel in, and it has been easier for ELCK workers to reach the Pokot people with the Gospel.

Two final comments:

1. When we talk of “Kenya” in the rest of this study whatever the political structure and system (pre-colonial, colonial or independent), *it will refer to the*

<sup>11</sup> For figures, although a bit out of date, see David B. Barrett (ed.), *World Christian Encyclopedia*, p. 432 ff, 659 ff, 685 ff

<sup>12</sup> We will return to that development in ch. 5

present geographical area, unless otherwise stated.

2. When the early mission activities in Kenya are studied, it is important not to forget the impact of the railway between Mombasa and Kisumu, originally called *The Uganda Railway*. From the very beginning the railway created a lot of problems for the British colonial authorities and was a financial burden on the taxpayers. The expression *The Lunatic Express* is easy to understand.<sup>13</sup>

But from a Christian point of view it ought, perhaps, be labelled *God's Highway*. When the SLM representatives came to Kenya in 1939, the only major tribe in western Kenya which hadn't been reached by any Protestant mission, was the Kisii tribe. One of the important reasons for this rapid expansion of Christian mission work in Kenya west of Nairobi was this railroad. It was hated by many British tax payers and by a number of politicians, but it functioned as an instrument for the Gospel.<sup>14</sup>

The railway has, thus, influenced the history of Kenya in two opposite ways. On the one hand it was such a financial burden to the British Government that it forced the government to give Kenya a changed status. In 1920 the country became a colony; as a consequence, a number of white settlers entered the country. On the other hand, the railway eased the spreading of Christianity in western Kenya. When the colonial era ceased in the 1960's, and together with it most of the white settlers and colonial officers disappeared, the railway remained. But it was not only the railway which remained – also the Christian presence which had been eased through it.

## Portuguese mission work in Kenya

The first identified Christian presence within the boundaries of Kenya, as we know it, appeared in April 1498 when Vasco da Gama on his way to India stopped at Malindi, visiting the sultan of the town. In connection with this visit, he raised a pillar, which still remains.<sup>15</sup>

The first native Christians ever in Kenya were a great number of women who wanted to be baptized. Surprisingly enough, it seems that hardly anyone had proclaimed the Gospel to them. It is no wonder even Vasco da Gama was caught by surprise. John Baur writes:

In 1502 Vasco da Gama, having heard at Sofala that the trade of gold found in the interior was in the hands of the Kilwa merchants, forced the ruler of this port to acknowledge the king of Portugal as his overlord. At the moment of departure, da Gama discovered that his crew had secretly brought 200 Swahili women on board all of whom wanted to become Christians. Fearing indiscipline, he sent them back despite their threat to drown themselves. But 40 of their original husbands refused to take them back and the Sultan sent word that they would surely be killed. Reluctantly, da Gama took them with him but kept them in locked cabins. From India, the younger ones were sent to Portugal. These outcast women are the first Christian converts of East Africa recorded in history.<sup>16</sup>

FROM 1505 ONWARDS, the Portuguese Crown tried to establish a military presence on the Kenyan coast, although rather halfheartedly. A fort was built at Kilwa which was abandoned after a few years. For almost a century the coastal area received occasional visits by Europeans.

13 Concerning the railway, see Charles Miller, *The Lunatic Express*, and M. F. Hill, *Permanent Way, The Story of the Kenya and Uganda Railway*. – As a Government Minister, Winston Churchill was involved in this project, calling it “one of the most romantic and wonderful railways in the world” (Hill, p. 299). In 1907 he estimated the original capital cost for the project to be £ 5,502,592 (p. 301), a tremendous amount of money in those days.

14 “In 1900 Kavirondo [Nyanza] (at the time the eastern province of Uganda, later

transferred to Kenya) had not a single mission. In December 1901 the railway from Mombasa reached Kisumu. By 1908 there were six different mission societies at work in the region... On the Protestant side, by 1908 there were five different societies occupying eight stations, twenty-one missionaries in all.” (Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*, p. 415; cf. Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa*, p. 168 ff.) Cf. Sundkler's statement on the railways in general in Eastern Africa: “The railways aided the missions in

consolidating their outreach throughout the area.” (Sundkler – Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, p. 521.)

15 For the following, see John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, p. 86 ff. It is striking that Baur, with his pro-Roman Catholic attitude, has to struggle hard to find elements in the Portuguese mission work to praise. – Concerning the pillar, see <http://www.malindikenya.com/placesofinterest2.htm> (071128).

16 John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, p. 87

One important visit was made by the famous missionary Francis Xavier, coming to Malindi in 1542 on his way to India. His visit didn't, however, have any lasting impact.

What was more important was the development in the 1590's. In order to assist ships heading to India, the Portuguese king finally decided that his country needed a lasting military presence along the east coast of Africa. For that reason Fort Jesus, located in present-day Mombasa, was built in 1593–95. The fort was in Portuguese hands for more than a century (1593–1631, 1632–1698); later it was recaptured for just one year, 1728–29. Except for the fort, Portugal didn't succeed in creating any stable military presence along the coast.

It can also be noted that the church, or chapel, built inside of Ft. Jesus is one of the first churches built in East Africa, perhaps the very first one.<sup>17</sup>

In 1597, some Augustinian hermits were sent to four different places along the Kenyan coast (Faza, Pate, Lamu, Mombasa). After only three years, some 1200 people had been baptized.<sup>18</sup> All the same, Portugal never succeeded in creating any strong congregations along the coast. When it lost control over the coastal area, Christianity was totally wiped out.

When Krapf came to Mombasa, a little more than a century after the Portuguese had finally been defeated, there were no Christian traces at all remaining – except, of course, the ruins of Fort Jesus. Even in the ruins themselves, the Christian remnants are few.<sup>19</sup>

Of all mission enterprises undertaken in Africa,

the general work made by the Portuguese seems to have been among the worst failures. In fact, two authorities on African Church history – Fr. John Baur and Prof. Adrian Hastings – have even felt the need to explain in great detail why the work undertaken by the Portuguese priests was such a catastrophe.<sup>20</sup>

When Carl-Eric Sahlberg tries to explain the failure of the Portuguese mission work undertaken at the Coast of Kenya, he makes a list of not less than nine reasons: more interest in trade than in mission, a tyrannical rule, a cultural insensitivity, mass baptisms, lack of national leaders etc.<sup>21</sup>

The cultural influence, however, shouldn't be underestimated.<sup>22</sup> It also seems that Portuguese ships saved Northeastern Africa from being conquered by (Moslem) Arabs. Without the Portuguese naval presence, Islam would have had a much stronger military and cultural influence in that area.<sup>23</sup>

And when we think of the martyrs of Mombasa, the Portuguese mission work cannot be considered as a total failure. The martyrs of Mombasa left a *spiritual legacy* which has been important until today.

#### The martyrs of Mombasa, 1631

Many critical words can be said about the Portuguese Christians, and how they spread their faith to others. But they also laid a foundation on which the martyrs of Mombasa stood during the persecution of 1631.

The background of those events is as follows:

17 Today only few remnants exist of the early Portuguese churches; David B. Barrett et al. (ed.), *Kenya Churches Handbook*, p. 29. Concerning the history of Fort Jesus as a building, including the church/chapel, see James Kirkman, *Fort Jesus. A Portuguese Fortress on the East African Coast*.

18 John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, p. 87

19 Even inside the fort itself, there are not many remnants giving witness to the fact that Christians lived there for a full century. Remnants of Chinese porcelain are numerous while Christian artefacts, like religious medallions etc., are surprisingly few; James Kirkman, *Fort Jesus*, p. xvi, plate 24 ff.

20 Baur has a special section in his book re-

lated to the failure of the Portuguese work (*2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, p. 92 ff), while Hastings describes the Portuguese mission work in Africa as a whole in a full chapter (*The Church in Africa 1450-1950*, p. 71-129)

21 Carl-Erik Sahlberg, *From Krapf to Rugambwa – a Church History of Tanzania*, p. 13 f

22 The *linguistical* and *cultural* legacy is quite obvious, especially in the Swahili language, e.g. in words like table (*meza*), wine (*mvinyo*) etc. When Lutherans celebrate Holy Communion, the Swahili expression used (*Meza ya Bwana*; "The Lord's Table") is influenced by both Portuguese culture and language: The word *Meza* shows

that the Portuguese brought not only *tables* to the coast of Kenya, they even gave the *word* for it. They also introduced many *foodplants*, which today are very common in the households of Kenya: yellow maize, cassava, pineapples, pawpaw and bananas (Sahlberg, *From Krapf to Rugambwa – a Church History of Tanzania*, p. 14; cf. Hollingsworth, *A Short History of the East Coast of Africa*, p. 86 f).

23 According to Peter Falk, the Portuguese naval battles in the Indian ocean in the 16<sup>th</sup> century saved the Ethiopian kingdom from being conquered by Arabs (Peter Falk, *The Growth of the Church in Africa*, p. 81 f)



In 1614 the Portuguese captain of Mombasa killed the sultan of Malindi. The authorities in Portugal disapproved of this act, and took care of the sultan's son, *Yusuf bin Hasan*. He had been a Moslem by birth but was raised as a Christian, receiving the baptismal names Jeronimo Chingulia. He even married a Christian Portuguese woman. In 1625 he was enthroned by the Portuguese rulers in Mombasa as sultan. Secretly, however, he was drawn back to his original Moslem faith, while the political authorities became more and more suspicious of him. The Portuguese even planned to hand him over to the Inquisition at Goa in India. But before that was done, he rebelled and managed to take control over Fort Jesus.

The Christians fled to the Augustinian monastery and church. Five days of unsuccessful negotiations with the Sultan made it clear that they could save their lives only by embracing the Muslim religion. All the Portuguese, except one, chose death. Among the Africans, seventy-two men and their wives, remaining "strong and constant", paid with their lives for their loyalty. Some four hundred others were sent as slaves to Arabia in exchange for ammunition. The others hid or fled and some went over to the Sultan. Thus, in all some 300 persons, half of them Portuguese, half Africans, died for their faith in Christ.

What is remarkable about these *Martyrs of Mombasa* is the strong Christian conviction of the Africans. After the Portuguese were killed, these people had nothing to fear from their former masters and could have saved their lives easily by obeying the Sultan. That they were ready to die for their faith shows that for them being a Christian meant much more than being a friend of the Portuguese.<sup>24</sup>

Later on, in connection with a canonization process, a number of sworn evidences were collected and sent to Rome. These evidences prove that the Sultan had tried to influence people to return to their old Moslem faith:

Dom Antonio [the leader of the Christians, also a close relative to the Sultan] answered: "O Sultan, even if you have acted this way, I myself am a Christian and I am not a man who goes back on what he has undertaken, and above all I know the Law of Christ to be the truth". To this weighty testimony may be added the humbler but not less moving witness of a native girl from the Cape Delgado Islands, who encouraged and comforted her terrified mother Catarina: "Fear not, mother. We are going to heaven." Then she faced an Arab soldier, saying: "We are Christians. Kill us." And thus both were pierced by the sword."

... The sworn evidence of twenty-three witnesses recorded in this document makes it abundantly clear that all the martyrs could have saved their lives by accepting Islam ...<sup>25</sup>

The legacy of the martyrs remains and their memory ought to be cherished by all Christians of East Africa!

#### The martyr factor in Kenya and East Africa

One reason why Christianity has expanded so rapidly in eastern and northeastern Africa – especially in Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia – seems to be that many Christians have been willing to suffer, and even lose their lives, because of their faith.<sup>26</sup>

The martyrs of Mombasa in 1631 are not the only Christian martyrs in East Africa. Both missionaries and local Christians have later on lost their lives because of their faith. There are several wellknown examples connected with Kenya:

- The first "modern" martyr in Kenya was David Koi, a Giriama teacher-evangelist, who was taking care of runaway slaves. He was captured by a group of Arabs at Mwaiba Hill, near Kilifi, in 1882. When he had preached to them about *Bwana Isa* (Lord Jesus), he was buried up to his neck in a hole and then beheaded.<sup>27</sup>

- One of the most famous martyrs in East Africa was James Hannington, the Anglican bishop of "Eastern Equatorial Africa", a diocese roughly equi-

24 Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, p. 90

25 Baur, *ib.*

26 The persecutions in Ethiopia seem to be

an important explanation for the later development and expansion of Christianity there, while the Christian Church in Uganda was born in martyrdom

27 W. B. Anderson, *The Church in East Africa 1840-1974*, p. 16; cf. David B. Barrett et. al. (ed.), *Kenya Churches Handbook*, p. 22, 31

valent to modern Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. He was murdered in October 1885 in eastern Uganda after having passed Mumias in Kenya, killed by the order of the *Kabaka* (ruler) of Buganda.<sup>28</sup>

- The Methodist missionaries John and Annie Houghton, who were working among Gallas along the Tana river (influenced by Krapf's Galla vision!), were killed by Maasai warriors on May 3, 1886.<sup>29</sup>

**WHEN WE REMEMBER** martyrs like these, and cherish their memories, their examples ought to inspire new generations of Christians in East Africa and elsewhere. In the forefront of these martyrs stand the Christians of Uganda – a country, with which Kenya has got so many links.

One fact is rather striking: When the Anglican Church in Uganda celebrated its first 100 years, Archbishop Janani Luwum had written a foreword and an epilogue to the centenary volume – but the book ends by describing how he had been murdered by the government !

When Luwum had been murdered by Idi Amin in February 1977, the events were interpreted in the following way in a Christian newsletter, published (in Kenya!) just one week later.<sup>30</sup> These words are

said about a Ugandan martyr, but they are also relevant to all the martyrs of Kenya:

For some, these events will be called a bitter tragedy, a sad and sorrowful chapter in the life of the Church in Africa. But let me remind you that martyrdom is an authentic aspect of the history of Christianity in Uganda. This is the reason why we can give praise to Almighty God, even as we lament and weep.<sup>31</sup>

**THE PASSAGE ABOVE** was originally written in early 2007 while I was working in the library of Matongo Lutheran Theological College, Sondu. By that time the situation in Kenya was very peaceful. Since then a lot of things have happened, starting with the election in Dec. 2007. Why those things have happened, we have problems in understanding and explaining. We just know that many people have suffered and even died, and that many of them who died and suffered were Christians. We also know that among the first buildings to be attacked by arsonists in Dec. 2007 was Kibera Lutheran Church in Nairobi.



Kibera, Nairobi



This burnt Bible was found in Kibera. The text which is visible is Psalm 124.



The Kibera Church was burnt by arsonists

<sup>28</sup> Mwanga, the *Kabaka* of Buganda, had Hannington executed. He “was murdered on the borders of Busoga” (Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa*, p. 104); cf. *Rabai to Mumias*, p. 15, 183, and David B. Barrett et. al. (ed.), *Kenya Churches Handbook*, p. 22.

<sup>29</sup> W. B. Anderson, *ib.*, p. 8. Nthamburi writes about the murder of the Houghton couple:

“This was the only known instance where missionaries were actually killed by the inhabitants.” (Zablon John Nthamburi *A History of the Methodist Church in Kenya*, p. 45)

<sup>30</sup> Tom Tuma – Phares Mutibwa (eds.), *A Century of Christianity in Uganda. 1877–1977*, p. 171 ff

<sup>31</sup> Tuma – Mutibwa (eds.), *A Century of*

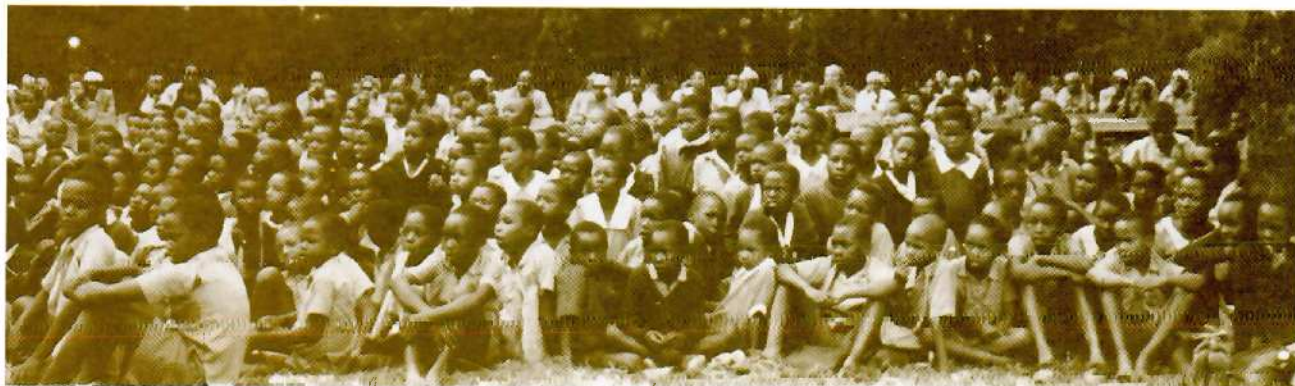
*Christianity in Uganda. 1877–1977*, p. 174. – The book was produced in Uganda but printed in Kenya. It was really an act of courage when the editors of the book, and through them the entire Anglican Church in Uganda, dared to accuse their own government of murder!



The Kibera Church before and after it was burnt

*Let us all pray to God Almighty,  
that he will protect Kenya and its people,  
that he will bless and comfort all who suffer,  
that the violence will stop and justice will prevail,  
that the country will be rebuilt according to his will,  
and that, in the end, his holy name  
will be glorified through all true Christians.*

Children – the future of Kenya





*“My food”, said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying, ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”*  
(JOHN 4:34–38, NIV)

*It is really important to collect and transform all African languages, which we can reach, into written languages. This is a preliminary work for the time, when the Lord will pave a way to the hidden, inner Africa.*  
(J. L. KRAPF).<sup>1</sup>

## 4. A time for sowing – and a time for visions, 1844–1855

IN THE WINTER OF 1826, a young man travelled from Tübingen in southern Germany to the famous mission institute in Basel, in Switzerland, announcing that he would like to study there. He travelled the distance, some 200 kilometres, together with his elder sister during a school vacation. It seems that he walked the whole distance on foot.

The director of the institute refused to accept him as a student – because he was just 15 or 16 years old! But they continued to stay in contact with one another.

The next spring, in 1827, the young man returned to the mission institute, this time together with his father, and got enrolled there as a student.

This was how the missionary career of Johann Ludwig Krapf started. His life career does not resemble that of anyone else's.<sup>2</sup> Now, more than 125 years after his death, it is due time to recognize

his contribution to Christianity in Africa – and in Europe!<sup>3</sup>

Bengt Sundkler, in his monumental work *A History of the Church in Africa*, is one of the few who have understood the importance of Krapf. He tries to summarize his contribution in the following way:

Krapf and his co-workers made contributions in four different areas: geographical exploration, contacts with African chiefs, translation work and the formulation of missionary strategy.<sup>4</sup>

One reason why the legacy of Krapf really hasn't been properly recognized is, perhaps, that it is so rich that hardly any single individual can master all the fields that he dealt with:

- practical mission work in Ethiopia (Abyssinia) and present-day Kenya, 1837–55

<sup>1</sup> "Es ist gewiss wichtig, alle africanischen Sprachen, die wir erreichen können, zu sammeln und in Schriftsprachen verwandeln. Dies ist Vorarbeit für die Zeit, da der Herr den Weg ins verborgene Innere Africa bahnen wird." J. L. Krapf, quotation

taken from <http://www.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/pro/veran/2004/missionsbibeln/krapf.php?la=de&fr=y> (2007-11-29)

<sup>2</sup> ADB, vol. 17, p. 49 ff

<sup>3</sup> It is important that the biography of Krapf by Eber mentioned above (p. 21, note 6)

is translated into English. I have only been able to glance through it, but it is very illuminating and important from an East African context.

<sup>4</sup> Bengt Sundkler – Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, p. 517



- geographical explorations (especially in eastern and central Kenya)
- cultural/ethnological observations, both in Ethiopia and Kenya
- pioneer linguistic studies in at least six African languages: Swahili – Nyika (Giriama) – Kamba – Pokomo – Hiau – Galla/Oromo<sup>5</sup>
- pioneer Bible translations into Galla/Oromo, Swahili, Nyika, and Kamba<sup>6</sup>
- on top of which he mastered a number of other languages,<sup>7</sup> including “vulgar Arabic”,<sup>8</sup>
- a large missiological correspondence involving recipients in a number of countries

That statement which often is used about Augustine and Luther can almost be said about Krapf: When he died so many things had changed in East Africa, many of them because of the work undertaken by him, that no one can really say what that part of the world would have looked like without his contribution.

#### J L Krapf – his work

The studies undertaken by J. L. Krapf in Basel lasted between 1827 and 1829; he entered when just 17 years old and left when still a teenager! (He was born Jan. 11, 1810.<sup>9</sup>)

As it seems, he was not totally spiritually satisfied with his studies in Basel – he had expected that only very holy people would be studying there! But still he did benefit greatly in at least three areas from his time in Basel:

- The Mission institute possessed a practical *geographical knowledge* which exceeded that which was found in the universities. This was the time, when no one in Europe (or Africa) knew where to find the sources of the Nile river!<sup>10</sup>
- It seems that he got a basic understanding of *ethnographical and philological* issues
- It was here that he got to know the Swedish missionary *Peter Fjellstedt*, a friendship which was to last up to 1881, when they both died

AFTER TWO YEARS, Krapf left the Mission institute in Basel, took his *Abiturienten-Examen* (roughly equivalent to graduating from Secondary school today in Kenya) and started to study theology in the famous university of Tübingen in southern Germany.

Theologically he was for a while moving in different directions: During one period he lost his mission interest, which hardly is surprising, considering the spiritual atmosphere in German universities by that time! For a while he read mystical writings, e.g. by Böhme. In general, he was influenced by the German Pietistic tradition. That also explains what we today would call a rather “ecumenical” attitude on his side.

After graduation in 1834, he served a short period as a parish pastor but left his service after a conflict.<sup>11</sup> A meeting with Peter Fjellstedt in Stuttgart in Germany came to influence him for the rest of his life: His interest in mission work was revived, and he returned to Basel.

While continuing his studies in Basel he got

5 C P Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa*, vol. 2, p. 113

6 For some details of Krapf's contributions as a Bible translator, see Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, p. 72 ff, 446 ff (related to the Galla/Oromo language) and Sundkler-Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, p. 518. – Cf. his own statement: “On the 8<sup>th</sup> of June, 1844, I began the translation of the First Book of Moses with the aid of Sheikh Ali Ben, Mueddin of Barava, who was the Kadi (Judge) of Mombaz. I always considered this day as one of the most important of my life.” He had arrived in the Zanzibar-Mombasa area in Jan. 1844! (Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours*, p. 131)

7 His linguistic capacity was outstanding:

“At school he quickly caught up with his contemporaries and then outstripped them, soaking up languages like blotting paper. He learned Latin and Greek and made a start on French and Italian; when he decided to go to the Basel Missionary Institute, he prepared himself by learning Hebrew and before long had ‘read the greater portion of the Old Testament in the original’. After that, when assigned to work in Ethiopia, he also studied Ge'ez, Amharic and Arabic. See M. Louise Pirouet, *The Legacy of Johann Ludwig Krapf* (internet site <http://www.martynmission.cam.ac.uk/CKrapf.htm>; Dec. 14, 2007)

8 Sundkler-Steed, *ib.*, p. 518

9 A good summary of his life and travels – however only up to 1855, and only in Ger-

man – is given by Hanno Beck in: Johann Ludwig Krapf, *Reisen in Ostafrika... Stuttgart 1964*, vol. I, p. XI-XVII. Two important biographies are found on the Internet: M. Louise Pirouet, *The Legacy of Johann Ludwig Krapf* (see note 7, above) and, in German, by Karl Knauss – Clemens Gütl: <http://www.bautz.de/>, May 8, 2008

10 Hanno Beck, in: Johann Ludwig Krapf, *Reisen in Ostafrika*, vol. I:VII

11 “After ordination in the Church of Württemberg he accepted a curacy but only for a short time. After a sermon on the imminence of the end of the world his superiors admonished him for ‘improper enthusiasm’, and he resigned.” Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, p. 66, n. 108.





We can, however, note that by this time his first important “Galla vision” is influencing his decisions and priorities. With that vision in his head, he turns south. Arén writes:

The CMS enterprise in Ethiopia came to an end by the departure of the missionaries from Massawa in July 1843. Isenberg and Mühleisen proceeded to Egypt and were later commissioned to India. The Revd and Mrs Krapf turned south and sailed for Zanzibar. The following year they began a work among the Rabai tribe of the Nyika people, thereby establishing the East Africa Mission of the Church Missionary Society.<sup>17</sup>

EARLY IN 1844 HE CAME to the East Coast of Africa. In May the same year he and his wife came to the

Mombasa area. His activities are well known in the history of missions (his wife died early after their arrival to Mombasā), but nowadays they are often described in a rather critical manner, as we have seen.

Another description, much more positive and certainly more correct, is given in the official ACK history, celebrating 150 years of Anglican mission work in Kenya.

The missionaries had to study and know African languages in order to communicate with the Africans and spread Christianity. For this reason they undertook a good pioneering work in African languages. They spent a lot of time preparing grammars, dictionaries and New Testament translations into Swahili and other African languages.



From Krapf's *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours*<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, p. 84

<sup>18</sup> Map found in J. L. Krapf, *Reisen in Ostafrika und Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours*

Dr. Krapf was a brilliant linguist and reduced Kiswahili and other coastal dialects to writing in the Roman alphabet, being a pioneer in future grammars and dictionaries in these languages. Thus, right from the initial stages of planting Christianity in East Africa, missionaries placed importance on studying African languages and translating scriptures into vernaculars...

Krapf travelled up and down the coast and into Ukambani. He was eager to set up a chain of missions right across Africa. He thought that a short stay in a village, teaching the fundamentals of Christianity, training a catechist and then moving on was the best way of proceeding. In this way he anticipated the thinking of Roland Allen which, though slow to win acceptance, has been so valuable to missionary strategy in the twentieth century. Krapf was quick at picking up languages and translated parts of the Bible at great speed. Being himself full of energy in between bouts of fever, he did not seem to see the difficulty of asking missionaries to deal with three or four new languages and sets of custom in a year...<sup>19</sup>

**IT IS OFTEN FORGOTTEN** that one of Krapf's most important contributions was linguistic. When he came to Africa, Swahili was still written in Arabic letters. He was a pioneer not only in *writing* Swahili with Latin letters, but also in *producing texts* in Swahili (Bible translations, a grammar, a dictionary etc.), as well as giving Swahili its first *orthography*.<sup>20</sup> He was also one of the first to understand the importance of the Swahili language.

In the linguistic field, particularly Swahili, Krapf was a pioneer and as such his influence was to prove fundamental. He thought he had found that Swahili was "spoken, at least understood from the Equator to the Portuguese settlements in Mosambic", and the language thus offered what Krapf always was looking for in peoples and in languages, a key – in this case a linguistic key – to the languages of the interior.<sup>21</sup>

**STILL MORE IMPORTANT**, however, were his visions, which had a tremendous importance in many areas of Europe when people in different mission societies planned mission enterprises.

### The most important legacy of J L Krapf – his visions

As a mission strategist, Krapf was very much in favour of mission enterprises all over Africa. In that aspect, he was just one of many men with an eagerness for mission, although one of the most important.<sup>22</sup>

But what makes him so important, are his two rather peculiar mission visions.

- His vision of a chain of mission stations across Africa, according to Dr. Sundkler, stimulated "many Protestant mission boards to think in terms of transcontinental strategies".<sup>24</sup> – He got the idea of a chain of mission stations going from Mombasa in the East to the Gabon river in the West in August 1844, shortly after the death of his wife. Later he started to plan for similar chain of mission stations following the Nile.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Rabai to Mumias*, p. 10

<sup>20</sup> For details, see M. Louise Pirouet, *The Legacy of Johann Ludwig Krapf* (see note 7, above) and Karl Knauss – Clemens Gütl: <http://www.bautz.de/>, May 8, 2008; cf. *Rabai to Mumias*

<sup>21</sup> Sundkler – Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, p. 518

<sup>22</sup> <http://kenyalogy.com/eng/mapake/af1858.html> (Nov. 28, 2007); some details on the map must be incorrect: the map is said to be from 1858, although some details are dated 1859

<sup>23</sup> "Within twenty-five years (1863-88) seven mission societies were established in East Africa. They were all inspired, in different degrees, by the visits and the work in the

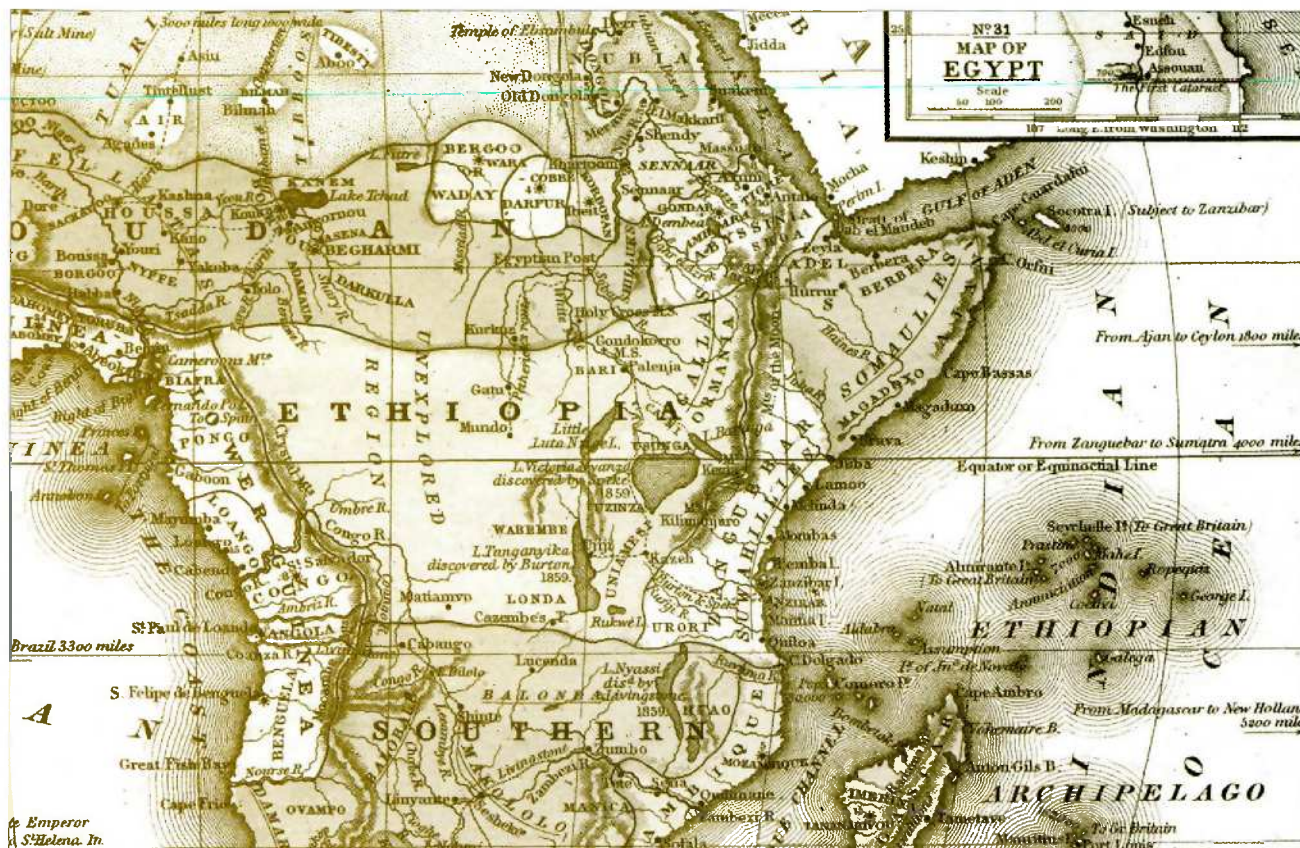
region of two earlier missionaries: Johann Ludvig [Ludwig] Krapf and David Livingstone." (Sundkler – Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, p. 510)

<sup>24</sup> Sundkler – Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, p. 510. Cf. his statement on p. 519: "Other missions also became caught up in the fascination of Krapf's continental vision. English Methodists and at least four German missions – Berlin, Hermannsburg, Leipzig and Neukirchen – started work in East Africa."

<sup>25</sup> The original vision of a chain of mission stations was first expressed in his *Reisen in Ostafrika*, I:213 f, but modified in the English translation: "... I have been appointed the secretary of a special committee (con-

nected with the Missionary Institution at Chischona, near Basel) for the purpose of locating twelve mission-stations along the banks of the Nile from Alexandria to Gondar, the capital of Abessinia, whence other stations will be hereafter established toward the south, east, and west of Africa, as it shall please Providence to show the way, and point out the requisite means. This line of twelve stations will be termed the 'Apostles' Street' as each station... will be called by the name of an apostle". (Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours*, p. 133, note)





Map of Africa, 1858 (or later) <sup>22</sup>

• Still more important was his “Galla vision”.<sup>26</sup> Today it has been misunderstood and even ridiculed. But from a historical point of view, it has been tremendously important.

**WHY WAS HIS GALLA VISION** so important? – In order to understand the importance of it, which even has influenced the origins of ELCK, we need to study the maps reproduced on p. 34, p. 35, p. 37.

The first map, from 1812, shows what people in Europe, if they were *very learned*, knew about the interior of Africa. It was almost – nothing. Although the Nile had been known for thousands of years, no-one knew for certain where it originated.

But learned people suspected one thing: In order to reach the interior of Africa with the Gospel, they had to convert the Galla (Oromo) people. The

Galla people was understood to be the key to the interior of Africa.

As far as we know, Krapf didn’t *invent* this idea. But no one has done more to *stress* the Galla vision to Christians in Europe.

When we analyse the historical development in detail, we can see that this Galla vision influenced a lot of mission supporters all over Europe to send missionaries to Africa. Quite many of these missionaries were sent out to start a work among the Gallas, and Krapf was very important in influencing these mission societies with his Galla vision. Gradually, they also got an increasingly better knowledge of the interior of Africa.

His influence can be described along different lines, in the following way. At least three or four denominations were influenced by his Galla vision:

<sup>26</sup> In the book about his travels in Africa, Krapf has a special section describing the Galla “Nation” (Krapf, *Reisen in Ostafrika*, I:92 ff), though he preferred to call

them *Orma* or *Oroma* (“strong, or brave men”). He believed they might consist of some 6 – 8 million “souls”. His statement in the German original (I:93) that he had

identified some 60 subtribes is not found in the English translation (Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours*, p. 72)

<b>1. Anglican</b>	<b>2. Lutheran</b>	<b>3. Methodist</b>	<b>4. Roman Cath.</b>
1. Kenya,	1. Hermannsburg	<i>Methodist Ch.</i>	(Galla work)
2. Indirectly:	<i>Natal</i>	<i>of Kenya</i>	
<i>Uganda,</i>	2. SEM <i>Ev.Ch. Eritrea</i>		
<i>Tanzania</i>	<i>Ev.Ch. Mekane Yesus</i>		
	(Jubaland Mission)		
	3. Germ. Mission in Tanz.		
	<i>certain dioceses within ELCT</i>		
	4. SEM > SLM		
	<i>Lu.Ch. Eritrea</i>		
	<i>Lu.Ch. Ethiopia</i>		
	<i>ELCK</i>		

1. The Anglican Church in Kenya, indirectly also the Anglican Churches in Uganda and Tanzania, originates from the work which Krapf started in Rabai outside Mombasa in 1844, later assisted by Rebmann and Erhardt.<sup>27</sup>

2. The Hermannsburg mission was almost created for the purpose of reaching the Gallas with the Gospel. However, their missionaries were not successful when reaching the east Coast of Africa. They returned to South Africa (this was the time before the Suez canal), where they originated a work – in Natal!<sup>28</sup>

The Swedish Evangelical Mission, however, was more successful in establishing work in Abyssinia (Ethiopia). It took many years for them to reach the Galla people, but out of this work has come several Churches and mission enterprises:

- the (Lutheran) *Mekane Yesus Church in Ethiopia* (with some 4–5 million members)<sup>29</sup>
- the Evangelical Church in Eritrea
- the SEM mission work which for many years existed among the Somalis (Jubaland)<sup>30</sup>

Other Lutheran Churches and mission enterprises in East Africa also go back to the influence of Dr. Krapf. Two of the most important examples:

Some of the dioceses in ELCT, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, originate from mis-

sion enterprises influenced by Krapf; as we have seen, he inspired not less than four German mission societies (Berlin, Hermannsburg, Leipzig and Neukirchen) to start mission work in what we today call Tanzania and/or Kenya<sup>31</sup>

The SLM work which started in Eritrea in 1911, gradually came to Ethiopia and finally to Kenya in 1948 was very much influenced by the Galla vision through its background in the Swedish Evangelical Mission<sup>32</sup>

3. The Methodist Church in Kenya, which originated from the Methodist mission work in Kenya, started with the express purpose of reaching the Galla people with the Gospel.<sup>33</sup>

The Methodist leaders in England were so influenced by Krapf's book about his African journeys (presumably the English translation: *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours*, published 1860), that they in Nov. 1860 decided to start a ministry in East Africa. Dr. Krapf even travelled to Kenya and assisted the missionaries in selecting a fitting place to build a mission station, i.e. Ribe close to Mombasa, where the work started in 1862.<sup>34</sup>

4. It can also be noted that certain of the Roman Catholic mission endeavours in East Africa also were influenced by a *Galla vision*.

The problem to be defined is this: In what way

<sup>27</sup> For details, see, e. g., *Rabai to Mumias*

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa. From Antiquity to the Present*, p. 76. Concerning the origins of the Hermannsburg mission, see Gustav Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, p. 105 ff; the Oromo vision (including the mission-

ary ship, the "brig Kandaze") which ended in Natal is described on p. 110 ff.

<sup>29</sup> See Gustav Arén, ib., passim

<sup>30</sup> We will return to this work in the next chapter

<sup>31</sup> Sundkler – Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, p. 519; cf. also note 24, above

<sup>32</sup> We will return to this issue in the next chapter

<sup>33</sup> Zablon Nthamburi, *A History of the Methodist Church in Kenya*, p. xvi

<sup>34</sup> Nthamburi, *A History of the Methodist Church in Kenya*, p. xvi f



was the Roman Catholic mission strategy to reach the Gallas *influenced* by Krapf, and to what extent was it rather *competing* with his vision? It is, however, evident that a Galla vision, whatever its origin, influenced quite much of the Roman Catholic mission endeavours in northern Kenya.<sup>35</sup>

## Conclusion

The Galla vision of Krapf has often been misunderstood or even ridiculed.<sup>36</sup>

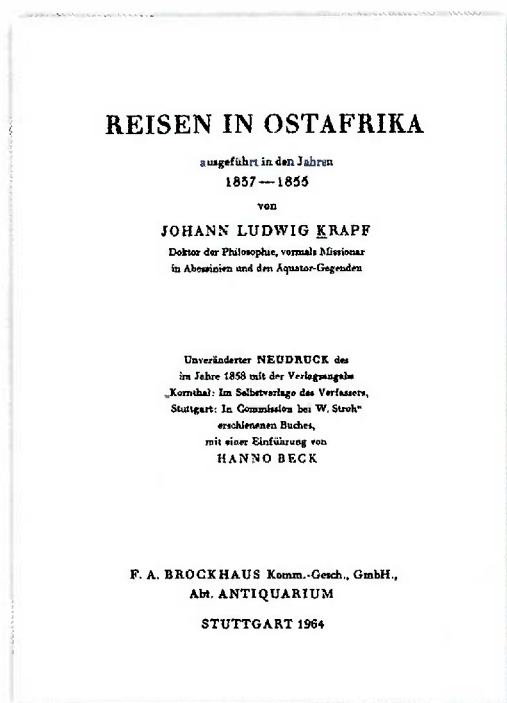
The fact is: Krapf longed for bringing the Gospel to the Galla (Oromo) people. He didn't succeed – then. But as a result of the work which at least partly was inspired by this vision, there are today millions of Christians in different Churches across East and Northeast Africa. And today a number of

them are, in fact – Oromo.<sup>37</sup>

When SLM planned to start mission work in Kenya in 1939, the whole religious geography in the country had been influenced by the work undertaken by persons who in different ways walked in the footsteps of Krapf. In Western Kenya there remained only one major tribe which hadn't been reached by protestant missionaries – the *Abagusii*.

LET US SUMMARIZE the influence of Krapf and his co-missionaries by quoting a Roman Catholic priest and scholar:

The legacy of Krapf, Rebmann and Erhardt lies primarily in their contribution to widening the knowledge of East Africa's geography, its literary enrichment and in their spirit of preaching the gospel "in and out of season." From the viewpoint of conversions, their impact was negligible. But East Africa owes to Krapf the first transcription of the Swahili language in Roman characters. The first Swahili dictionary, grammar and New Testament are all due to Krapf. Later missionaries were to draw heavily from his efforts.<sup>38</sup>



The book that inspired a number of missionaries and mission societies

<sup>35</sup> Lawrence M. Njoroge writes openly about the influence of Krapf and his Galla vision in his book *A Century of Catholic Endeavour. Holy Ghost and Consolata Missions in Kenya*, p. 28 f, 32. Paul Tablinho writes in a more vague way about Krapf's importance, and he is even missing in the index: *Christianity among the Nomads. The Catholic Church in Northern Kenya*, p. 102 ff, 302 (missing!)

<sup>36</sup> The Methodist scholar Zablon Nthamburi writes: "The early missionaries to East Af-

rica were obsessed with the dream of converting to Christianity the Galla 'nation' which they envisaged to be a great 'nation'. The originator of this idea was Dr. Krapf, who from the beginning showed a lot of interest in the Galla and very much wanted to work among them". (Nthamburi, *A History of the Methodist Church in Kenya*, p. xv.) Cf. Gustav Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, p. 72 f.

<sup>37</sup> When I recently gave a short speech on the topic: "Vision – mission – Church", and

talked about the vision by Krapf, a man in the audience, an Ethiopian pastor, informed me that he himself in fact was an Oromo. He, together with many others, is a fruit of that Galla vision – just like the Christians in Sweden, can be called the fruits of the vision of St. Ansgar. Two visions which originated in the plans of God!

<sup>38</sup> Lawrence M. Njoroge, *A Century of Catholic Endeavour*, p. 29

## Forward to Galla, or die!

THE MOTTO OF THE SEM MISSION TO ETHIOPIA FROM 1865<sup>1</sup>

*Give us the Gallas and Central Africa is ours.*

THE GALLA VISION OF J. L. KRAPF<sup>2</sup>

*... the SEM Board clearly saw God's finger pointing  
towards East Africa, and it followed the call.*

ALLAN HOFGREN<sup>3</sup>

## 5. Lutheran mission work in Eastern and North Eastern Africa, 1865–1936

AS WE HAVE NOTICED, Dr. Krapf had to return to Europe in 1855 for health reasons. Instead of working as a missionary in the field, he became involved in supporting a number of mission projects, several of them being, in different ways, related to his “Galla vision”. His influence perhaps even increased after his return to Europe! It was seen especially in three ways.

a. In 1858 he published his book *Reisen in Ostafrika ausgeführt in den Jahren 1837–1855*.<sup>4</sup> After a couple of years, an English translation was published: *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours during an Eighteen Years' Residence in Eastern Africa*.<sup>5</sup> For many reasons, not only mis-

sionary ones, it is a very important book. As we have seen, it inspired several mission enterprises in Africa.<sup>6</sup> It is also one of the earliest written sources related to the ethnology of Eastern Africa, concerning Kenya and Tanzania perhaps the very first.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, it is unfortunate that the English version is heavily abbreviated.

b. His linguistic work, which continued in Europe up to his death in 1881, paved way for other missionaries especially in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania.<sup>8</sup>

c. Up to his death he was engaged in a vast correspondence with a number of mission leaders and mission supporters from many countries. He was

1 According to Hofgren, the difficulties in reaching the Galla tribe were enormous. “To start with the missionaries had to settle in Kunama in western Eritrea and then in the coastal area. But the dream of reaching the Gallas was alive, and it was to get its practical result through six Galla expeditions. ‘Forward to Galla or die’ – that was the motto.” Allan Hofgren, *EFS rötter eller De trodde och vågade*, p. 58; cf. the heading of the chapter.

2 The quotation taken from Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, p. 73

3 Cf. note 11, below

4 It seems that Krapf partly was inspired to write his book due to the enthusiastic reception of Dr. Livingstone’s famous book

*Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857)

5 J. L. Krapf, *Reisen in Ostafrika ausgeführt in den Jahren 1837–1855 von Johann Ludwig Krapf*. It was reprinted 1964 with an introduction by Hanno Beck. The English abbreviated translation was published in London 1860 under the title *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours during an Eighteen Years' Residence in Eastern Africa*... The author is called *the Rev. Dr. J. Lewis Krapf*. This translation was reprinted in 1968.

6 Concerning this, see the previous chapter

7 The book was not only written some 30–40 years before the colonization of East Africa started, Krapf was also very

critical to the idea of mixing mission with colonialism: “Expect nothing, or very little, from political changes in Eastern Africa. As soon as you begin to anticipate much good for missionary labour from politics, you will be in danger of mixing yourself up with them... banish the thought that Europe must spread her protective wings over Eastern Africa, if missionary work is to prosper in that land of outer darkness.” J. L. Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours*, p. 512 (the original: *Reisen in Ostafrika*, II:520)

8 As we have noted, he worked especially with, e.g., Amharic, Oromo, Swahili, Nyika (Giriama) and Kamba



important in creating a mission interest, especially in Germany and Northern Europe, as well as in Great Britain.

We will now study some aspects of the early Lutheran mission work in Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Kenya, one of the decisive elements in the development being the Galla vision.

# 1. Lutheran mission in Ethiopia/Eritrea, 1865–1936

In 1856, pastors and laymen active in the evangelical revival within the Lutheran Church of Sweden formed an organisation called *Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen* (EFS); the name used internationally is usually *Swedish Evangelical Mission*, SEM.<sup>9</sup>

Immediately after the founding of SEM, the members started to discuss whether to commence mission work abroad or not. As part of this process the Board took contact with mission leaders in other countries, some of them being friends of Krapf, e.g. Bishop Gobat, who had been with him in Abyssinia/Ethiopia. Finally they wrote directly to Krapf himself. In April 1864 he advised Dr. Rudin, one of the SEM leaders:

I mean that you ought to choose the pagan area and the Galla people in particular for your mission field.<sup>10</sup>

May 23, 1865, can be considered to be the birthday of the Lutheran Mission work in (North) Eastern Africa. That day the SEM Board decided to begin mission work in Africa,<sup>11</sup> a decision which two weeks later, June 8, was unanimously confirmed by the Annual Conference. SEM resolved to

‘explore the countries of the Nile and the Red Sea coast’ with a view of penetrating to the Oromo.<sup>12</sup>

In order to reach the Galla region, the SEM missionaries – with the support of their Board – were willing to suffer almost anything. Many of the missionaries died in service after just a few years, some were killed and many returned home with broken health.<sup>13</sup> Still they had a very strong support from the mission friends, and no one presumed this mission enterprise to be an easy or rapid task.<sup>14</sup>

THIS EARLY VISION of reaching especially the Galla people in Africa has, today, often been either ridiculed or misunderstood.<sup>15</sup> It is therefore relevant to ask: Why did so many people in Europe single

9 For details about this early development of SEM, see Gustav Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, p. 114 ff

10 Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, p. 122. – According to Krapf, a certain Galla woman called Fatme, who had died as a Christian, had asked the Chrischona mission to send missionaries to her people. Krapf stated: “This prayer is not yet fulfilled. You can do it now!” H. B. Hammar, *Evangel. Fosterlands-Stiftelsens Ostafrikanska mission 1865–1900*, p. 11

11 Allan Hofgren, a specialist on the SEM history, is impressed with the efforts undertaken by the Board and its Mission leader, Waldemar Rudin: “One is impressed when reading about the struggle undertaken by the Mission Director W. Rudin really to find the right mission field. The Galla land, as it has been called, had competition from, i.e., China, India, Mauritius, and the area of the la Plata river in South America. But the SEM Board saw God’s finger pointing clearly towards East Africa, and it followed the call.” Allan Hofgren, *EFS rötter*, p. 58

12 Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, p. 122. In fact the decision was to start working among the Galla, but Arén preferred to use the expression Oromo whenever possible.

13 Of the first seven male missionaries sent out in 1865–66, only two died in Sweden. L. J. Lange returned to Sweden in 1866, and Petrus Englund in 1869. The other five died on the field: C. J. Karlsson and Olof Hedin died in sickness (1867 and 1868, resp.), while three were killed: Per Eric Kjellberg and J. L. Elfblad quite soon after arriving (1869), and Per Eric Lager some years later (1876). The most tragic case was the fate of the Kjellberg family: Per Eric Kjellberg arrived in Africa in Nov. 1865 and his fiancée Maria Carlsson in Jan. 1869. They were married in Febr. 1869. Ten weeks later the husband was murdered; on Nov. 1 his posthumous son, Carl Eric, died shortly after birth; the wife/mother died on Nov. 6. Within seven months a whole family of three persons had been wiped out. – Details taken from Ivan Hellström, *Bland faror och nöd i Ku-*

*nama*, p. 9 ff.

14 This attitude was shared by many missions and missionaries. Cf. the comment by Louise Pirouet: “Trained as he was by the Basel Mission, Krapf himself may have been unsurprised that he and his colleagues made only slow process. Basel missionaries in West Africa found their work equally slow at first; the emphasis was on faithfulness rather than on spectacular results.” M. Louise Pirouet, *The Legacy of Johann Ludwig Krapf* (<http://www.martynmission.cam.ac.uk/CKrapf.htm>, 071214)

15 Pirouet gives a number of examples, e.g. “Krapf is barely mentioned in Adrian Hastings’s monumental *Church in Africa, 1450–1950*” (Pirouet, *The Legacy of Johann Ludwig Krapf*; <http://www.martynmission.cam.ac.uk/CKrapf.htm>), and Nthamburi: “The early missionaries to East Africa were obsessed with the dream of converting to Christianity the Galla ‘nation’ (Nthamburi, *A History of the Methodist Church in Kenya*, p. xv)

out the Galla (Oromo) people for mission work? There are, according to my understanding, at least three answers to that question, two being more historical and the third one more spiritual.

1. It is important to remember how limited the geographical knowledge was in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. For people in Europe with special knowledge about the African situation, the Galla tribe appeared to be the key group for anyone wanting to reach the interior of Africa.<sup>16</sup> This fact becomes very clear when you study the maps produced during this time – just look at the maps reproduced in the previous chapter.<sup>17</sup>

2. The general opinion was furthermore that the Galla tribe was a large and organized group in the interior of Africa. Some descriptions were rather romantic,<sup>18</sup> and it was “known” that the Galla tribe consisted of some 8 mill. people. This means that they would have made up at least 5 % of the total population of Africa.<sup>19</sup> Today we know this figure to be far too high, but by that time the tribe was considered a key group to be reached.

3. For one reason or another, God often works with visions when calling Christians to spread the Gospel, Acts 16 being a kind of model. (In that chapter we see that St. Paul brought the Gospel from Asia Minor to Europe, Greece, because God had let him see a man in a dream.) In mission history there are numerous later examples of how Christians in one nation have felt a special call from God to undertake a mission work among a special group of people, even on another continent.<sup>20</sup> There are two famous Norwegian examples, both having a connection with the ELCK history: Some

mission friends in Norway felt a special call to work in India among the *Santal* people, while others felt compelled to go to *China*. From these visions two important Norwegian mission societies have developed: the *Santal Mission* and the *Norwegian China Mission* (the later today called *Norwegian Lutheran Mission*).<sup>21</sup>

In his summary, Arén writes in a fascinating way about the Galla vision and its consequences:

The history which has been narrated in this book can be likened to a drama which unfolds itself in a colourful variety of scenes... There is one dominant theme to the whole drama: the vision of taking the gospel to the Oromo, or the ‘Galla’... The vision was shared by British, Swiss, German and Swedish missionary societies. Each of these nationalities were to contribute the men and the means which eventually gave momentum to the planting of the Evangelical Church of Eritrea and the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in Ethiopia...

The vision of taking the gospel to ‘Galla’ was pursued with astounding tenacity...

The vision of ‘Galla’, which Swedes shared with Germans, was to bear fruit in more than one area. The work around Massawa, the missionary endeavours in Kunama and Mensa, the ministry among Orthodox Christians on the Eritrean highlands, the missionary efforts among the Somali of the Kismayu area are illustrative of this fact. The ministry at Imkullu with its special concern for freed slaves, for the education of girls, for the treatment of the sick, for the feeding of victims of famine and for the creation of literature in several languages is a good example of missionary activity on a broad front.<sup>22</sup>

16 Concerning the Oromo (Galla) peoples, see Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, p. 30 ff, and concerning Krapf's interest for them, p. 72 ff

17 Cf. the maps on p. 34, 35 and 37

18 It seems that this romantic European fascination with the Galla gradually disappeared, or perhaps rather was transferred to the Zulu / Matabele in Southern Africa and the Maasai in Kenya.

19 In the 1870's, it was believed in Europe that Africa had a total population of appr.

200 mill. inhabitants; some 30 years later, the figure had been corrected to 150-180 million. (See figures in *Nordisk familjebok* 1876, 1:217, and 1904, 1:260 f: <http://runeberg.org/nfaa/0117/html> and <http://runeberg.org/nfba/0146/html> and <http://runeberg.org/nfba/0151/html>). Krapf understood the Galla tribe to consist of some 6-8 mill. people; cf. note 26 (p. 37) above.

20 It is very interesting to note that visions when they, according to human understanding, “succeed”, can be of three kinds:

1. The vision is fulfilled, 2. The vision is fulfilled after a long time (sometimes very long!), 3. The vision is fulfilled – but in another place than first expected!

21 In 1964 the Santal Mission, which was invited to join the LCK (ELCK) work as a supporting mission, declined the offer, while NLM became a supporting mission to ELCK in 1977

22 Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, p. 439 ff

The vision really gave rich fruit; one reason perhaps being that Christians were very willing to suffer for the sake of the Gospel: The decision to work among the Gallas was made in 1865, but not before 1923 could the Swedish Evangelical Mission fully start to work among the Galla people. The Hermannsburg mission had to wait even longer before reaching the Gallas, from 1853 up to 1927!<sup>23</sup> Those are wonderful examples of Christian faithfulness.

It must be stressed that the results depended not only on the missionaries and their support from abroad, but also to a large extent on a number of local Christians, the most important one of these perhaps being *Onesimus Nesib* (c. 1856–1931). He was one of the first Oromo Christians and active in the Galla ministry longer than anyone else, some 60 years. As a child he was kidnapped and sold as a slave several times, but he ended up as a missionary and Bible translator!<sup>24</sup>

**BEFORE LEAVING THE SEM** work in Eritrea/Ethiopia, let us notice two sections of their work which are relevant when studying the history of ELCK.

#### a. The Galla expeditions

Up to the 1920's, SEM had great problems when attempting to enter the interior of Abyssinia/Ethiopia. As a consequence, the missionaries tried to

reach the Galla people from different directions. Not less than six "expeditions" were undertaken between 1877 and 1904.<sup>25</sup> When they had failed to reach the Gallas from the West (Sudan), and from the East (Ethiopia), they tried instead to reach them from the South. The "fourth Galla expedition" (1893–95) is, consequently, of special interest from a Kenyan perspective.<sup>26</sup>

A reconnaissance trip to reach the Galla from the South was first undertaken in 1887, when the missionary *August Bergman* went to Lamu.<sup>27</sup> For reasons of safety, he had to give up the idea of following the Tana river upstream, but he remained at Lamu for one year together with a young teacher from Monkullo in Eritrea, *Daniel Dalaba*.<sup>28</sup>

A few years later the political development seemed to make such a journey possible. In 1893 five missionaries together with a 14-year old boy from Lamu, *Stefanos Bonaya*, tried to reach "Borannagalla" from the south, starting from Lamu and Kismayu.<sup>29</sup> They arrived in Lamu, Dec. 1893, but for several reasons they did not succeed in starting their trip and so they remained at the Coast. When the British Protectorate (Kenya) was established in 1895 they tried to revive the plans but without success.<sup>30</sup>

In 1900 the British authorities finally allowed the expedition to take off, but reaching close to the Galla area a British colonial officer, Jenner, in a deceitful way stopped them from entering it, and

23 "It was not until 1904 that the Swedish missionaries were able to enter Ethiopia and to take up permanent residence and begin work in Addis Ababa... in 1923 [emperor Haile Selassie] permitted missionary work in the Galla country". Bodensieck, Julius (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, 1:18; cf. Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, p. 109 ff.

24 For an evaluation of his contribution, see Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, p. 164 ff (and 484); also Mekuria Bulcha, "Onesimos Nasib's Pioneering Contributions to Oromo Writing", in *NJAS* 4(1), 1995, p. 36–59. Bulcha doesn't want to recognize *Krapf's* linguistical contribution to the Oromo language, something which, of course, must have serious consequences for his own analysis of work done by *Onesimos*.

25 The first expedition took place in 1877. As Ethiopia was closed for Europeans, five

students from the mission school in Massaua, Eritrea, were sent as evangelists to the Galla area. Tafvelin, *Ut i all världen*, p. 69. The following expeditions consisted mostly of missionaries. – For a general description of these expeditions, see *Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsens 50-åriga verksamhet 1856–1906*, p. 149 ff; Tafvelin, *Ut i all världen*, p. 69, 73 ff, 82 ff; Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, p. 234 ff; Allan Hofgren, *EFS rötter*, p. 58 ff

26 Some parts of (modern) Kenya were very much in the minds of the SEM missionaries. In 1886 August Bergman wrote: "Harrar is closed for the Europeans, it is said here. Where shall our Board then find us a way, which can lead us to our target, the Galla mission? What is known about Mombas[a] and Ribe? Oh, that we soon receive our orders where to go." Tafvelin, *Ut i all världen*, p. 76.

27 As a result of this trip, he even suggested

that SEM should start a "waiting mission" (*väntansmission*, Swe.) among the Pokomo, but the SEM Board decided not to follow his suggestion; Tafvelin, *Ut i all världen*, p. 76

28 Arén, ib, p. 379

29 The missionaries were Rev. Karl Cederqvist, Rev. and Mrs. Nils Hylander, Rev. Heinrich Riggers, Mr. Karl Nyström (who later joined SLM); Arén, ib, p. 379 f. – Kismayu belonged to that area which in 1925 was transferred from the Kenya colony to the Somali colony.

30 The possibility of entering Borana country by passing lakes Baringo, Rudolph [Turkana] and Stephanie [Chew Bahir], was discussed within SEM, but the route was considered to be "long and difficult"; Arén, ib., p. 380



The members of the Fourth Galla Expedition.<sup>32</sup>  
Rev. Heinrich Riggers,  
Rev. Karl Cederqvist,  
Stefanos Bonaya,  
Mr Karl Nyström,  
Mrs. Edla and  
Rev. Nils Hylander.

they had to return to the Coast.<sup>31</sup> Thus ended the “fourth Galla expedition”.

All of these initiatives took place in what we today call Kenya.

These plans hadn’t, however, been totally in vain. One consequence of this last expedition was that SEM decided to open a mission station in Jubaland, which by then belonged to Kenya, another one that the mission society and its supporters got a special interest for the Borana people, which often was called *Borannagalla* in Swedish!

#### b. The Jubaland mission

For almost 40 years, SEM was active with mission work in Jubaland. The work started in 1898 and continued until late 1935. Gradually it expanded and several mission stations were built.

The Jubaland area was under British administration, belonging to Kenya (*British East Africa Protectorate*, later *Kenya Colony and Protectorate*) from 1895 up to 1925, when it was handed over to

the Italians and merged with the Somalian colony. Within a few years all Protestant missionaries got problems with the Italian authorities. The pattern in Jubaland was the same as in Eritrea: First, the Protestant missionaries were restrained in their work by the Fascists; later they were expelled. In Jubaland the missionaries were expelled in 1935.<sup>33</sup>

Two years later, in 1937, one of the Jubaland missionaries, Herbert Uhlin, published a book called “Closed paths” (*Stängda vägar*), like an epitaph over the Jubaland work.<sup>34</sup>

**THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS** why this Jubaland work should be mentioned here.

1. One is, of course, that the area for 30 years belonged to Kenya.

2. Another one is that several missionaries were active within the present borders of Kenya. Some missionaries had a special interest in reaching the Boranas with the Gospel.<sup>35</sup> Rev. P. Olsson even wrote a booklet about his journey to northern

31 Jenner’s death in an uprising the same year was understood from the SEM side as a divine punishment, that Gud had “judged” him; H. B. Hammar, *Evang. Fosterlands-Stiftelsens Ost-afrikanska mission*, p. 216 f

32 Photo courtesy of SEM, cf. Tafvelin, p. 83

33 This development is described in detail in Tafvelin, *Ut i all världen*, passim

34 Uhlin, *Stängda vägar*. Uhlin later became one of the first SEM missionaries to work

in Tanganyika.

35 Cf. the chapter “To Borannagalla!” in Hammar, *Evang. Fosterlands-Stiftelsens Ost-afrikanska mission*, p. 197 f





Rev P. Olsson



Kenya.<sup>36</sup> He travelled in the Marsabit area where ELCK now has been working for many years among the Boranas – which today is the largest Oromo/Galla group in Kenya!<sup>37</sup>

**A THIRD ONE IS THE FACT** that the SEM for many years had an outreach work in Kenya, in the Wajir and Moyale area.<sup>38</sup> From 1902 onwards, the British officers sent some native soldiers (*askaris*) located in NE Kenya to Kismayu (today in Somalia) for schooling. In this way a contact was established with the SEM missionaries there, and gradually more and more *askaris* were baptized. – Many soldiers were Nubians, Kikuyus and Nyassas, while a number were “huge and well developed” *Kavirondos* (Luos).<sup>39</sup>

**WHEN JUBALAND WAS** handed over to Somalia, many of the British soldiers were transferred to Wajir. The few Christian *askaris* who were staying there influenced their fellow soldiers. In 1928 Rev. Lundin baptized 27 persons in Wajir and 5 in Moyale and performed 5 weddings. In 1929 38 persons were baptized, 17 in March, and another 21 in October.<sup>40</sup>

This outreach continued until the missionaries from SEM were expelled from Somalia in 1935. It seems that the Swedish Evangelical Mission just gave up this rather promising work when the Jubaland field was closed. One reason was, perhaps, the extremely difficult travelling conditions;<sup>41</sup> even more important might have been the security situation which has been dangerous even up to today.

One of these Luo soldiers who stayed at Wajir for a while and had been baptized by Rev. P. Olsson was the famous *Gideon Magak*, later Senior

<sup>36</sup> In his booklet, he consistently wrote “Masarbit”. By that time (1912) it took 20 days to travel between Nairobi and Moyale, passing Marsabit; P. Olsson, *På väg till Boranna Galla*, p. 42 f

<sup>37</sup> In the report *Unreached Peoples of Kenya* it is said: “The Boran are the largest Galla-speaking people group in Kenya” (p. 19). Their population in 1979 was given

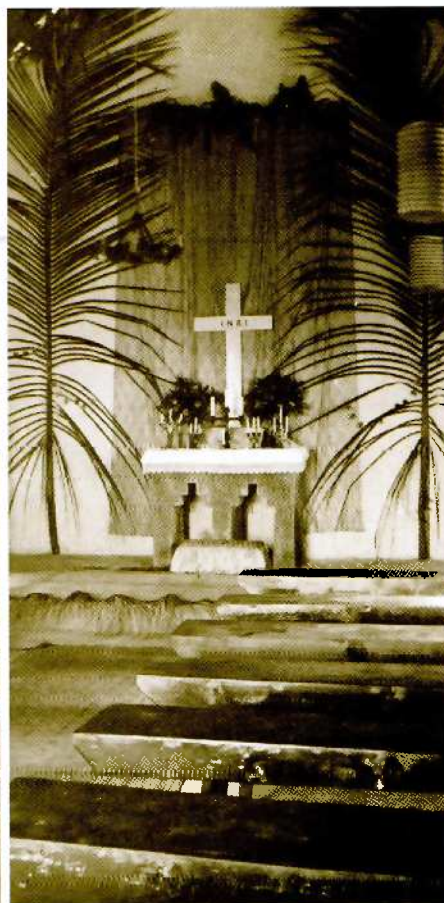
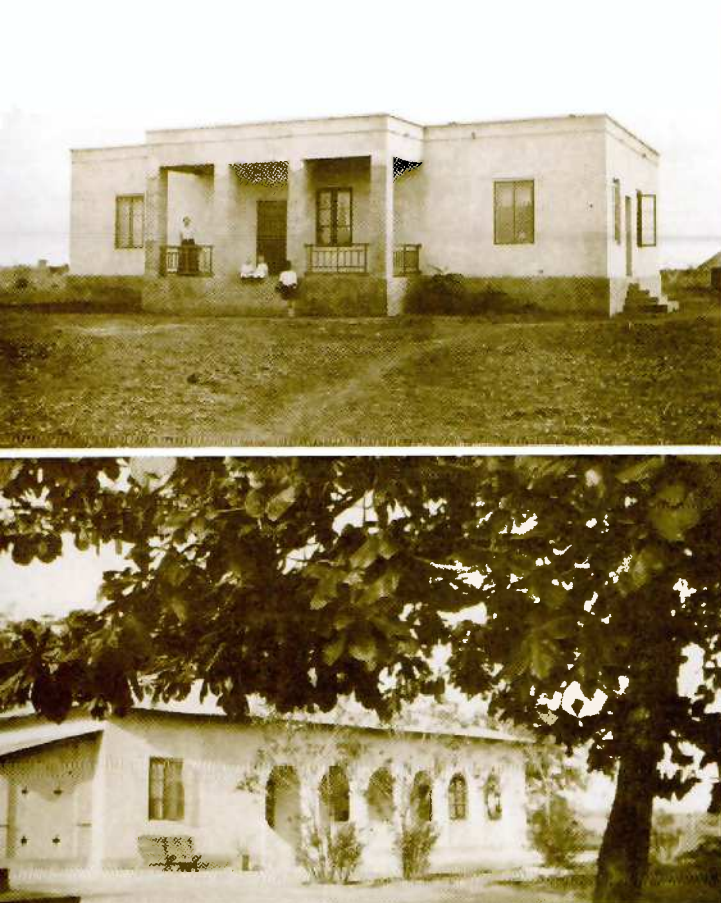
as 68,890.

<sup>38</sup> This Kenya work undertaken by SEM seems to a large extent to have been forgotten. In the mission literature it has mostly been treated as an outreach from the Jubaland work. It is to a certain extent mentioned by Tafvelin, *Ut i all världen*, p. 139 f; according to him it existed 1927–1935.

<sup>39</sup> Herbert Uhlin, *Med Gud i rishyddan. Wa-jermissionens uppkomst och utveckling*, p. 7 f

<sup>40</sup> Herbert Uhlin, *Med Gud i rishyddan...* p. 7 ff, 15 f

<sup>41</sup> The journey from Kismayu to Wajir was 450 kilometres; when travelling there you passed only one village! Herbert Uhlin, *Med Gud i rishyddan*, p. 16



The mission station and the church in Mofi, Jubaland (1918, 1929)

Chief in South Nyanza and for many years living in Oyugis. In 1939 Chief Magak advised the British District Commissioner in Kisii to welcome the SLM mission to the Kisii area; this information comes from Martin Lundström, who knew him personally. The fact that Magak had been baptized as a Lutheran might also have opened some doors for the SLM work in Luoland in the 1950's.<sup>42</sup>

IT CAN ALSO BE NOTED, that in the 1990's a group of Lutherans living at Garsen, Tana River, took contact with SLM in Kenya. They are in some way connected with the early Jubaland work, perhaps

as an outreach work. The SLM missionary Martin Lundström mentions that very same group in one of his books.<sup>43</sup>

The Lutheran Somali pastor *Enok Boru*, for many years living and serving in Mombasa, and who also had some contacts with Lundström, was one of the last persons with a direct connection back to the SEM Jubaland work. Rev. Boru is the only Somali ever to have been ordained as a Lutheran pastor, an event which took place in 1933.<sup>44</sup>

42 Martin Lundström, *Afrikaminnen*, p. 109 ff (picture of Magak between pp. 128 and 129)

43 Correspondence between T. Rova and R. Imberg, Aug. – Sept. 1994 (Letters, *PARI*). Mr. Rova mentioned a place called Kulesa

Salama, a place which SEM missionaries started to visit in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and which Lundström also mentions in his book *Afrikaminnen*, p. 117. Later in the same book (p. 118) Lundström mentions the connection between the Tana River

work and the Galla ministry.

44 The ordination year is given as 1933 by Uhlin (*Stängda dörrar*, p. 194 f), while Lundström gives the year 1932 (*Afrikaminnen*, p. 117 ff; a photo of Boru is found in the photo section after p. 80)



## Failure and success – early Lutheran mission work in Kenya and Tanzania

As we have noticed, J. L. Krapf was very successful in inspiring mission societies to open up mission work in Eastern and North Eastern Africa. Some of them were influenced by his *idea of a chain of mission stations*:

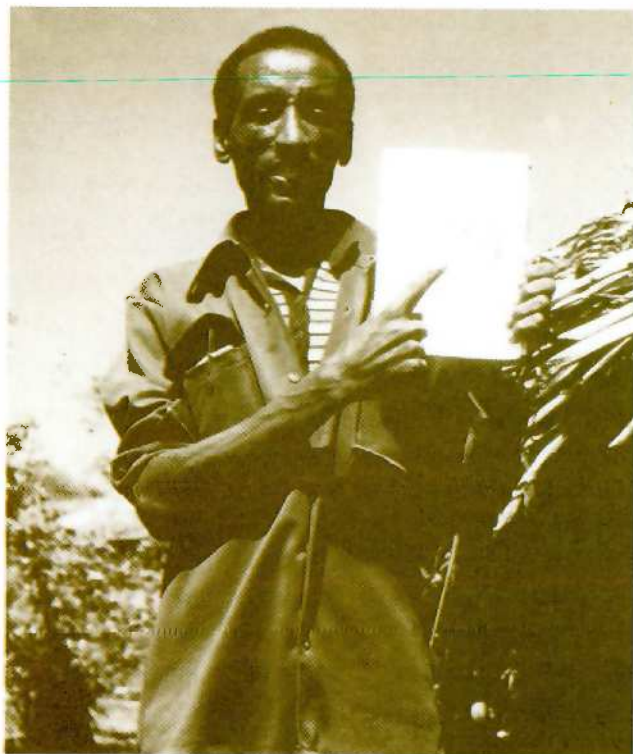
Within twenty-five years (1863–88) seven mission societies were established in East Africa. They were all inspired, in different degrees, by the visits and work in the region of two earlier missionaries: Johann Ludvig [sic] Krapf and David Livingstone. Krapf travelled extensively in East Africa between the years 1844–1853. His vision of a chain of mission stations across Africa, another ‘Apostles Street’, from Rabai on the Indian Ocean coast to Gabon on the Atlantic, stimulated many Protestant mission boards to think in terms of trans-continental strategies.<sup>45</sup>

Other mission societies were, as we have seen, inspired by his *Galla vision*.

Still others were inspired by his *general mission vision*.<sup>46</sup> Several Lutheran mission societies working in Africa were directly or indirectly influenced by his visions and his ministry.<sup>47</sup>

Of special interest in this study is to compare the differences in the development of the Lutheran mission work in Kenya and Tanganyika (Tanzania).

In 1891 the *Bavarian Evangelical Lutheran Mission* started to work in Ukambani, east of Nairobi.<sup>48</sup> After just two years, in 1893, the work was handed over to the bigger and more influential mission society, the *Leipzig Mission*.<sup>49</sup> In connection



One of the first ELCK evangelists in the Marsabit area, Andrea Halakke Barako, 1982

with WW I, which affected both Kenya (a British Protectorate) and Tanganyika (a German colony), the Leipzig mission decided in 1914 to hand over the work and the stations to *Africa Inland Mission*, AIM, which also was working in Ukambani.<sup>50</sup> – Since then the AIM work has become the *Africa Inland Church*, AIC, and grown to be one of the biggest Protestant churches in Kenya.

Thus: Lutheran mission work was undertaken in central Kenya for more than 20 years – and disappeared without leaving almost any traces.<sup>51</sup>

45 Sundkler-Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, p. 510; cf. p. 519

46 See the previous chapter dealing with the life and ministry of Dr. Krapf

47 This is not the place to analyze Krapf's importance for Lutheran mission work in Tanzania, which in itself could be very interesting to study. Sahlberg states: "... it is appropriate to say that no mission in East Africa without the missionary Johann Ludwig Krapf." (Carl-Eric Sahlberg, *From Krapf to Rugambwa – a Church history of Tanzania*, p. 28). Also Henrik

48 Smedjebacka, *Lutheran Church Autonomy in Northern Tanzania 1940–1963*

(p. 36 f): "When Germany took greater interest in East Africa towards the end of the 1800's individual leader within the Leipzig Mission began to dream of a new mission field in Africa. The real impetus came in 1881, the year of Ludwig Krapf's death, when one of his good friends proposed that the Leipzig Mission should immediately engage itself in East Africa." Smedjebacka then describes the creation of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society for East Africa without mentioning the Leipzig Mission work in Kenya.

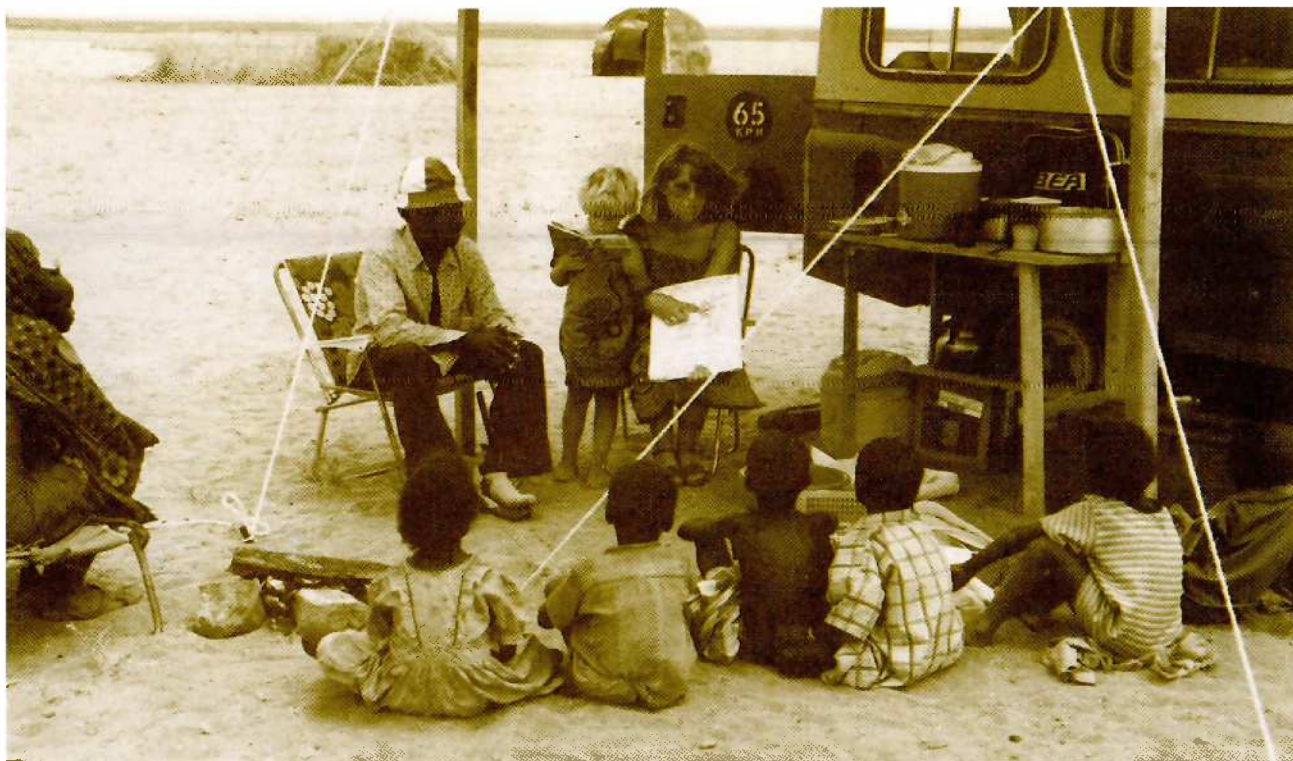
49 According to Julius Richter (*Evangelische Missionsgeschichte*, p. 612 f), Krapf had

inspired both the founding of the Bavarian organization, which later merged with the Leipzig Mission, and the pioneer work in Ukambani

49 Concerning the Leipzig Mission, see Bodensieck (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, II:1641

50 David B. Barrett et. al. (ed.), *Kenya Churches Handbook*, p. 22

51 It has even been said about Kenya: "No Lutheran mission organization entered the area until the time of World War II." (Bodensieck, Julius (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, I:17; cf. II:1642)



Early mission work in Marsabit (1980's)

The development in Tanganyika was totally different! Some Lutheran mission societies were established there, roughly at the same time: Berlin II (the Bethel Mission) started its work in 1887, Berlin I in 1891, the Leipzig Mission in 1893. Their work was also hit by the turmoil in connection with WW I, but the work survived.<sup>52</sup> Out of these mission efforts have come some of the present dioceses within ELCT, *The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania*.

**WE CAN ALSO NOTE** that a German "faith and alliance mission" with support from a number of Lutherans, *Neukirchen Missionary Society*,<sup>53</sup> started to work at Lamu already in 1887.<sup>54</sup> They later moved on to Ngao at Tana river where they were active up to

1914. After the war, the mission society once more sent missionaries to Kenya where they were active up to the outbreak of WW II. The work was finally handed over to the (rather reluctant) Methodists.<sup>55</sup>

### The split of SEM in 1911

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Swedish Evangelical Mission was split into two mission organizations. The formal reason for the split was a theological conflict related to the interpretation of the Bible, especially dealing with the infallibility of Scripture, but it is difficult to deny the existence of other elements as well, e.g. social.<sup>56</sup>

The majority of members, pastors and lay preachers remained within SEM, while a minority in 1911 formed a new mission society. Originally

<sup>52</sup> Bodensieck, Julius (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, I:16; unfortunately Sahlberg's description of the development (*From Krapf to Rugambwa – a Church history of Tanzania*, p. 59 ff) is rather unstructured.

<sup>53</sup> Concerning this organization, see Bodensieck, Julius (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of*

*the Lutheran Church*, II:164

<sup>54</sup> David B. Barrett et. al. (ed.), *Kenya Churches Handbook*, p. 22; Richter, *Evangelische Missionsgeschichte*, p. 109, and *Geschichte der evangelischen Mission*, 615 f (esp. note on p. 616); RGG IV:1425

<sup>55</sup> Some details are found in Nthamburi, *A History of the Methodist Church in Ke-*

*nya*, p. 46 ff, 149

<sup>56</sup> It can be noted that a number of prominent pastors remained in the leadership of SEM, while SLM was more dominated by lay leaders. The higher social classes were also more visible in SEM.



it was called *Missionssällskapet Bibeltrogna Vänner*,<sup>57</sup> a name which recently has been changed to *Evangelisk-Luthersk Mission – Bibeltrogna Vänner*, ELM-BV. – Internationally the name *Mission Society Bibletrue Friends* has sometimes been used, but in most cases the mission society is known as *Swedish Lutheran Mission*, SLM, a name which normally will be used in this study.<sup>58</sup>

This is not the place to analyse the theological discussions which led to the split.<sup>59</sup> What is of importance here are two facts.

The new mission society didn't have to initiate a discussion whether to start a ministry abroad or not. As a direct consequence of the 1911 split, a number of missionaries working in Eritrea decided to join the new, Bible conservative organisation.

When these missionaries, together with a number of the old mission friends, joined the new organisation, it meant that the old "Galla vision" almost automatically and without any discussion was transferred into this new mission body.<sup>60</sup>

**THE DEVELOPMENT IN** Eritrea/Ethopia can be summarized in this way:

The SEM work continued as before, while SLM started its own work: The missionaries worked in the same areas, but in order not to create unnecessary division and competition, SLM built up new mission stations some distance from the old ones belonging to SEM.<sup>61</sup>

The doors are opened in Ethiopia  
– and then closed!

In the 1920's, both SEM and SLM started to get a foothold in the independent kingdom of Abyssinia/Ethiopia. At last, after some 50 or 60 years, it looked like the Galla vision could be realized! It was a wonderful joy for the Swedish mission friends to see that they, at last, could begin to reach the Oromo people.<sup>62</sup>

But now, when the doors started to get opened in Ethiopia, other doors began to get closed. A chain reaction started, with several surprising consequences.

**THE PROBLEMS STARTED** in Eritrea as early as 1912 when the Roman Catholic Church got its first bishop there. From that year on, local Catholic leaders wanted the Italian colonial authorities to limit the possibilities for Protestant mission work. Gradually it became more and more difficult for Lutheran missionaries, whether coming from SEM or SLM, to work there.<sup>63</sup>

When the Fascists came into power in Italy in 1922, the pressure against Protestant missionaries in Italian colonies increased step by step, partly as a result of agreements between the Italian government and "the Holy See", the Vatican.<sup>64</sup>

The development escalated in 1935–36. In Sept. 1935 Italy attacked Ethiopia, using its troops in Eritrea. Later the same year, all Swedish missionaries had to leave Eritrea, a decision which was made with the support of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>65</sup>

In the middle of 1936, the Italian troops had managed to take control of large areas of Ethiopia.

57 For a long time the abbreviation BV was used, but in the 1990's the abbreviation MBV got official status

58 According to a letter in 1964 from Martin Lundström to Sigurd Stark, it was the British DC (in Kisii?), Mr. Norman, who suggested the name, appr. in 1948. In Ethiopia, *Bibeltrogna Vänner* called itself "Swedish Mission", but that expression could be understood in many ways, even as a political or military term. It seems the mission leaders in Sweden were not very happy with the name *Swedish Lutheran Mission* while Lundström was in favour of it. – Copy of letter, M. Lundström to

S. Stark, Febr. 11, 1964, p. 3 (file E 1 f:7; MBVA, RA)

59 The development, especially the theological aspect, is described in detail in some Swedish studies, especially in Lundqvist, *Organisation och bekännelse*, and Svensson, *BV 1911–1961*. Some new perspectives are given by Christina Nilsson in Rune Gustavsson, i. a. (ed.): *Jesusglädje, bibeltillit, missionsiver 1905–2005*, p. 163 ff.

60 Svensson, ib., p. 98; see also the references on p. 105 f to SLM books dealing with the Oromo/Galla people

61 Svensson, ib., p. 69 f. – Interesting per-

spectives are given by Alazar Menghestu in his study *Bakgrunden till och framväxten av en luthersk kyrka i Eritrea, 1911–1932*. His book, although not without bias, is important as a corrective to the official SLM history; he often refers to local sources which are both important and illuminating.

62 Cf. Tafvelin's expression "the triumphs of the Galla mission", Tafvelin, *Ut i all världen*, p. 126 ff

63 Tafvelin, *Ut i all världen*, p. 109, 115

64 Tafvelin, *Ut i all världen*, p. 115

65 Tafvelin, *Ut i all världen*, p. 123

After a few days, most of the Swedish Lutheran missionaries were compelled to leave the country.

The doors for preaching the Gospel had been wide open in the 1920's, at least in Ethiopia,<sup>66</sup> but suddenly both Swedish Evangelical Mission and Swedish Lutheran Mission found: All their mission fields in Africa had been closed because of this co-operation between the Vatican and Fascist government in Italy, executed through its colonial officers in East Africa.<sup>67</sup>

Not only Eritrea, but also Ethiopia became closed for all Lutheran mission work, and the SEM missionaries had already been expelled from their third African field, Jubaland in Somalia. – Swedish Evangelical Mission could still, however, continue with their old mission field in India.

**WITHIN ITS FIRST 25 YEARS** of existence, the members of Swedish Lutheran Mission, together with its Board, were caught twice in a surprising development:

- without having any plans for it, the mission society suddenly got two mission fields (Eritrea, Ethiopia)
- when they started to see some fruits of the work in the 1930's, both mission fields were unexpectedly closed because of certain events in world politics

**IN 1936, SWEDISH LUTHERAN MISSION** had become a mission society without any mission fields for its work abroad (while SEM remained with one of its four fields). What was now to be done? What made the situation even more complicated was that many people suspected that a second world war was coming.<sup>68</sup>

What happened now was that old plans were revived. Both SLM and SEM actively started to look for a new mission field. Swedish Lutheran Mission ended up in Kenya, and Swedish Evangelical Mission in Tanganyika (Tanzania) – but, God willing, it could easily have been the opposite! This we will see in the next chapter.

**THE QUESTION** *Why is there, today, an Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya?* has many answers, some of them being:

- the vision within Swedish Evangelical Mission for reaching the Galla people (and through them many other African tribes!) with the gospel which influenced a lot of Swedish Christians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century
- a theological conflict within SEM, culminating in 1911, which led to the emergence of the Swedish Lutheran Mission
- the Fascist dream of an Italian empire in Africa which robbed both SLM and SEM of their mission fields in Africa

**THESE ARE SOME OF** the reasons why the ELCK history starts in Kisiiland!

66 Tafvelin writes about “open doors” when describing the situation in Ethiopia, Tafvelin, *Ut i all världen*, p. 124

67 For the SEM reactions to the development, see Tafvelin, *Ut i all världen*, p. 135

f; the closing of the field in Jubaland is described on p. 136 ff. SEM has never been able to restart this unique work of bringing the Gospel to the Somali people. – For the SLM perspective, see Axel B. Sven-

sson, *BV 1911–1961*, p. 134 f.

68 The SLM Board was very much aware of the danger of a new world war; see, e. g., *BVMBV 1937:86* (published early 1938)



## II. FROM VISION TO MISSION

### Background and early history 1920–1957

I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

1 COR. 16:7 FF, NIV

*“... without a divine call and guidance, we cannot dare to depart at all. Here we must make the words of Moses into ours: If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.”*

EX. 33:15 [NIV]; A BIBLE QUOTATION USED BY THE SLM BOARD WHEN DISCUSSING THE OPENING OF A NEW MISSION FIELD<sup>1</sup>

## 6. The SLM search for a new field, 1920–1939

**LOOKING IN THE REAR** mirror of history, it is not surprising that SLM started to work in Kisii-land in 1948 (after an initial agreement which had been made in 1939). In fact, the SLM Board had expressed an interest in Kenya for a long time.

Let us now study two things:

- why did Swedish Lutheran Mission have such an interest in Kenya?
- how did it come that SLM began to work in Kisii-land, while Swedish Evangelical Mission, with a similar interest in Kenya, ended up in Iringa in Tanzania?

### Early plans for a new mission field

In 1921, when the SLM leaders had been frustrated for some time because of problems with reaching the inner area of Ethiopia (the Galla/Oromo area), the Mission Board had plans of opening a new mission field. Some contacts were then taken up with British authorities.

One alternative seems to have been opening a mission field in India. It can be doubted whether this alternative ever was made public to the mission friends.<sup>2</sup>

Another alternative, which was made public in 1921, was Western Kenya, the area between the big lakes, Lake Victoria and Lake Rudolf (today: L. Turkana). For political reasons, however, no definite decisions were made. One reason seems to have been that by this time the colonial authorities were reluctant to accept new mission enterprises.<sup>3</sup>

Nothing, however, came out of these plans. When Haile Selassie came into power in Abyssinia/Ethiopia, the political development in the country meant that both SLM and SEM, at least for a while, could reach the goal they had been longing for – *to Galla with the gospel!*

For this reason, the mission friends were asked to support an expansion of the work *in Ethiopia*. At the same time the Board of the Swedish Lutheran Mission gave an indication that the plans for entering *Kenya* were not cancelled for good; note also the Galla reference:

And then we have been abiding, hoping that the Lord, who always leads his people, would command the pillar of smoke to rise up and lead the way.

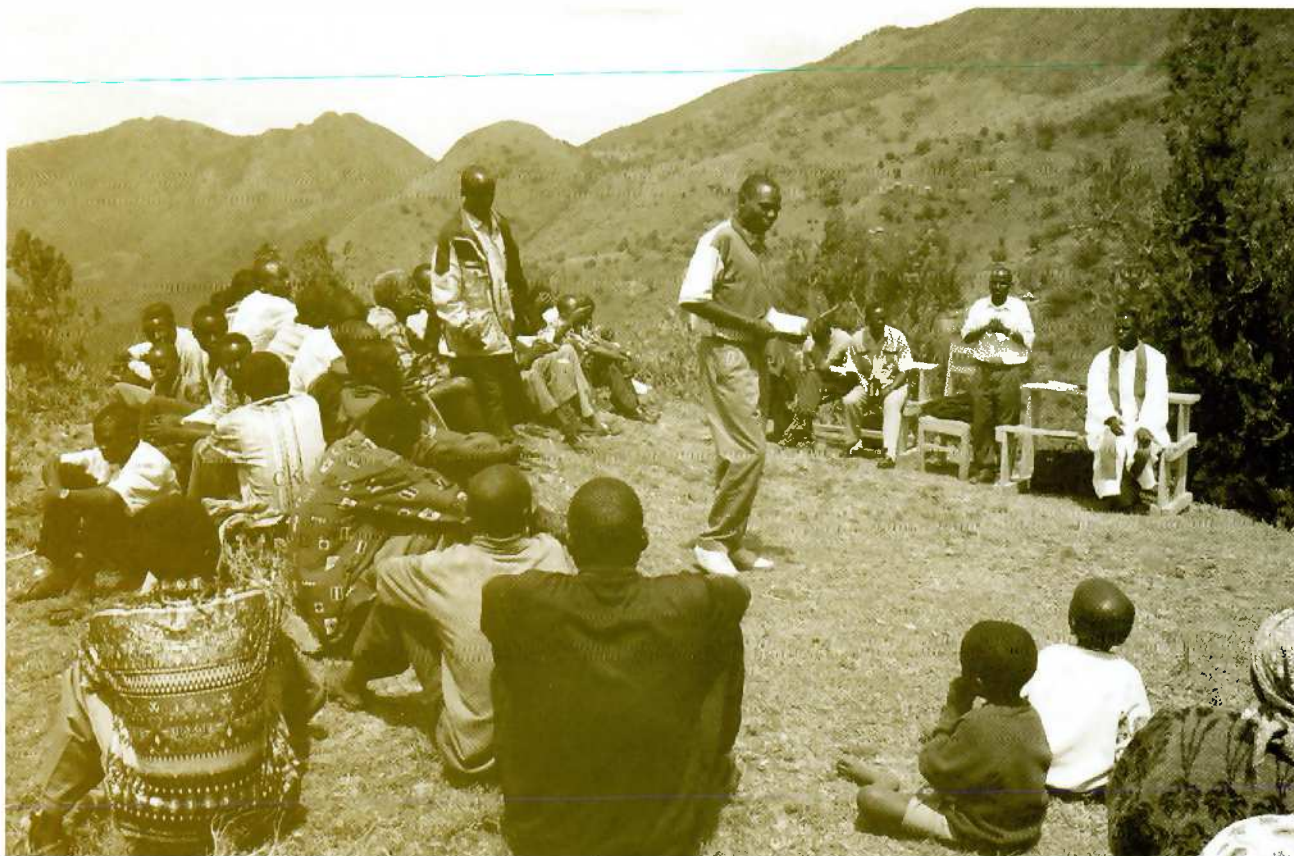
1 This Bible passage was quoted by the SLM Board when discussing how to open a new mission field in Africa, although they suspected a new world war to be imminent; BVMV 1937:86 f (printed early 1938)

2 One document in the SLM archives shows that the Board had received information from the colonial authorities about work in India (folder in file F 1:1, “Om upptagande av arbete i Indien”; MBVA, RA; no

date)

3 It is possible that the request came at a sensitive situation, coming at the very time when Kenya got a changed status, from Protectorate to Colony (1920).





Typical outdoor church, Pokot 2003

And now it has risen. But it didn't lead us – *at least not immediately* – to the areas between Victoria Nyanza and Lake Rudolf, but the train went in the old direction: Abyssinia and Galla. The new field was revealed to be the old and aftersought, which had been mentioned in thousands of prayers before the Lord.<sup>4</sup>

Some years later, the SLM Board once more considered Kenya as an alternative to Ethiopia (Abyssinia). They also established contacts with a Bible

conservative Anglican organisation, BCMS, which resembles the Swedish mission society in many ways, even in its name: *The Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society*.

BCMS started to work in the Pokot (Suk) area in Kenya in 1931;<sup>5</sup> it had been founded in 1922 after doctrinal controversies with CMS. (In East Africa, however, the two bodies managed to work together in harmony.<sup>6</sup>) The Board of Swedish Lutheran Mission had contacts with BCMS without arriving at any real decisions.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The statement by the Mission Board of SLM in the annual report, printed in early 1921, is written in the special style of Axel B. Svensson's; *BVMBV* 1920:73 ff – *italics*, by RI

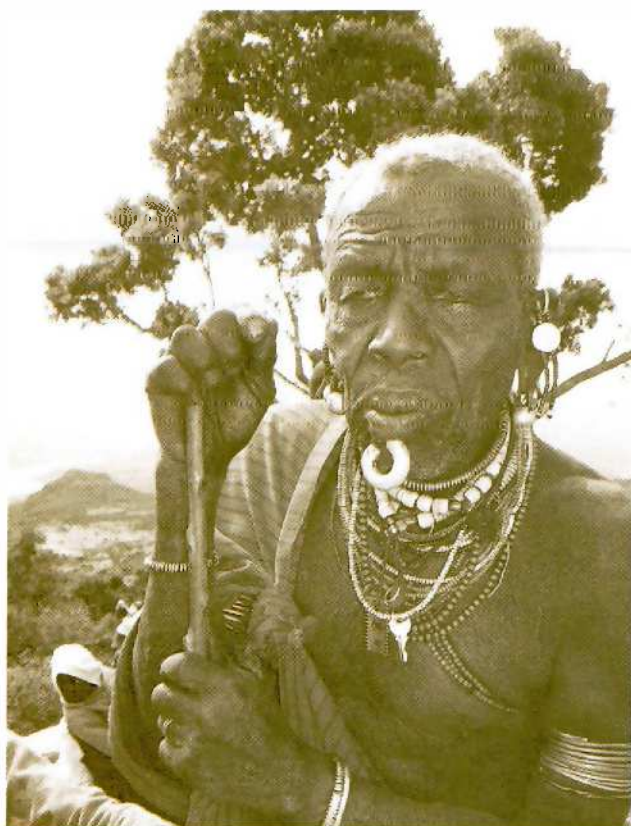
<sup>5</sup> David B. Barrett et. al. (ed.), *Kenya Churches Handbook*, p. 24, 35, *Unreached Peoples of Kenya*, p. 45 f and the pamphlet, *Sounding the Call. 50 years of sharing the Gospel of Christ in Pokot*. Concerning BCMS in general, see *ODCC*, p. 146; concerning Protestant mission work in

general in that area, see Erling Lundeby, *Protestantiske pionerer til Pokot – i tiden 1929-1964*, in: *Fast Grunn*, 1998:1.

<sup>6</sup> *Rabai to Mumias*, p. 64 ff

<sup>7</sup> In the 1930's, BCMS offered SLM to join their work east of Mt. Elgon. (Some SLM missionaries working in Ethiopia had established some contacts with BCMS missionaries working there.) The Swedish society declined the offer, preferring to search for a field of their own. According to SLM, the British society had *exactly* the same

understanding of Scripture as the Swedish society, and the same relationship to their Church (the Anglican) as SLM had to the Church of Sweden. However, the offer from BCMS was declined – for practical reasons, not doctrinal. It seems that the SLM Board as a *Lutheran* mission society by this time didn't see any problems in working together with an *Anglican* body; *BVMBV* 1938:88



Old wise man, Pokot



Baptism in Pokot

### Preliminary discussions about Africa

As we have seen above, the work in Eritrea and Ethiopia could continue for some years, but ominous signs started to be seen. The pressure against Protestant missions in Eritrea gradually increased, and in Ethiopia a similar pressure came immediately after the Italian occupation 1935–36. In late 1936, SLM suddenly found itself without any mission fields in Africa.

What should be done in such a situation? The deliberations of the Mission Board are disclosed in the the annual reports of 1937 and 1938 (printed early in 1938 and 1939, resp.).<sup>8</sup>

The Mission Board suggested that a new field should be opened in Eastern Africa, the region where the society had been working so far. If possible the new field should *not* be in an area controlled by a Roman Catholic power.<sup>9</sup>

At first, the British Tanganyika colony was an alternative, while later it almost was ruled out. The reason was *not* that another Swedish organisation, Swedish Evangelical Mission, had plans to open up work there,<sup>10</sup> an incorrect statement which is found in the official SLM history which was printed in 1961 and written by its Board Chairman.<sup>11</sup> The contemporary sources from the 1930's give a different and more detailed information:

<sup>8</sup> *BVMBV* 1937:84 ff, *BVMBV* 1938:86

<sup>9</sup> The experience of SLM was that Roman Catholic colonial powers often created problems for Lutheran mission work; *BVMBV* 1937:85

<sup>10</sup> It is evident that the SLM Board was very interested in everything related to Swed-

ish Evangelical Mission. In early 1938 the SLM Board noted that SEM, as it seemed, would begin to work in Tanganyika; *BVMBV* 1937:84. Tafvelin describes in a fascinating way how SEM originally, in 1937, had a plan to continue with their Galla/Oromo ministry, working among the

(rather small) Oromo tribes in Kenya, but how they ended up in Iringa in Tanganyika (after having passed Rwanda and Burundi and Ujiji in Tanganyika); Tafvelin, *Ut i all världen*, p. 153 ff and p. 64, below

<sup>11</sup> Svensson, *BV* 1911–1961, p. 152



The *real reason* why SLM in the late 1930's didn't consider Tanganyika to be an alternative was, according to the Mission Board, that it looked quite probable that "this area of Africa within quite a short time period once more will come under German control".<sup>12</sup> Early in 1938 the SLM Board publicly stated that Nazi Germany would try to regain the Tanganyika colony. They were definitely not afraid of making daring political statements!

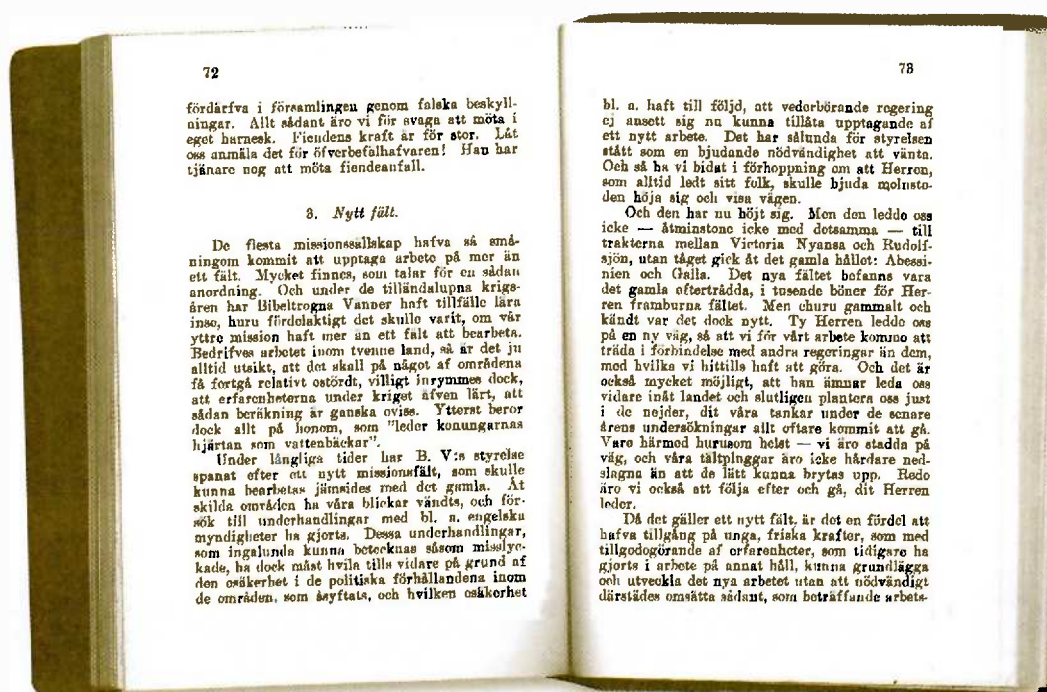
Thus, the best alternative in 1938 seemed to be Kenya. For that reason the Board wanted to send a couple of men to investigate the possibilities in that country. If the journey to Kenya wouldn't be successful, some neighbouring countries could also be considered.

In *early 1938*, while the matter still was under discussion, some alternatives were mentioned: British areas (Kenya was directly mentioned, indirectly also S. Sudan), Portuguese [Mozambique?], Belgian [Rwanda?], and even French [French Somalia/ Djibouti?].<sup>13</sup>

When the trip took place, in 1939, the mandate had been changed to Kenya, Tanganyika territory, N. Rhodesia (today: Zambia) and Rwanda. Some contacts with the different colonial authorities had already been established through the Swedish Foreign Office, and permission for an investigation team to enter the countries mentioned had been granted.<sup>14</sup>

**WHEN INFORMING** the mission friends of these plans and deliberations, the SLM Board also made some interesting comments – some having a practical character, some as matters of principle.<sup>15</sup>

SLM being a small organisation, the Board didn't want to send its few missionaries to a place with a bad climate, "the white man's grave". The delegates were, consequently, to look for an area with good climate and possibilities for a "plantation mission". The danger of a new world war (once more a prophetic statement!) meant that the missionaries



Plans for a "new field" in Kenya, 1920

<sup>12</sup> BVMBV 1937:84 f (printed early 1938). It was even stated: Only if the Lord in a very clear way led SLM to Tanganyika, would the society be willing to send missionaries there.

<sup>13</sup> BVMBV 1937:84 f (printed early 1938). According to a statement from 1961, Sudan was a very strong alternative, Svensson, BV 1911-1961, p. 152 f

<sup>14</sup> BVMBV 1938:86 (printed early 1939). Evidently, Tanganyika wasn't totally ruled out as an alternative!

<sup>15</sup> For the following, see BVMBV 1937:85 ff; cf. Svensson, BV 1911-1961, p. 154



could be cut off from Sweden for a long time. For that reason, the work ought to be self-dependent. A farm producing coffee,<sup>16</sup> cotton, etc., connected with a hospital, was mentioned as the best solution.

Some years earlier, in the middle of the 1920's, the Mission Board had made some interesting missiological statements, comparing mission practice and policy by that time with the mission profile of Paul, as described in Acts. Jerusalem and Antioch were compared with Växjö and Skara (famous early dioceses in Sweden), and further with Addis Abeba and Harrar in Ethiopia. The author – presumably Axel B. Svensson, for 55 years the leading man in SLM – was sceptical to big institutions.<sup>17</sup> Instead he favoured smaller mission stations.

### The trip to Africa starts

The Mission Board of SLM was still discussing the matter of finding a new mission field, when suddenly they got a possibility to send two representatives to Ethiopia. The formal reason was to settle some business with the Italian colonial authorities in Ethiopia, but the Board saw this as a God-given opportunity to make a reconnaissance trip to Africa.<sup>18</sup>

It is interesting to note how political issues can interact with a spiritual development: The Italian occupation of Ethiopia, which always has been considered as an act of naked aggression, had inter-

nationally caused a lot of bad will against Fascist Italy. Mussolini had every reason to improve his soiled reputation. It was therefore rather likely, from the very beginning, that Italy would be quite generous towards SLM (and also SEM, which was in the same position) when paying for mission stations and mission property which had been confiscated.

From the SLM side the Board hardly felt any need to discuss whether to send delegates to Ethiopia to settle the financial issues with the Italian authorities or not. They could expect the settlement to be generous. While in Ethiopia, it would be very easy for the SLM delegates to extend their African journey to Mombasa and from there start a fact-finding trip.

IT IS NOT OFTEN that a reconnaissance trip is so well-equipped as this one was. One of the travellers, Axel B. Svensson, has later given a rather amusing description of the journey and some details related to it.<sup>19</sup> But the official description is not the full story, especially not as it was written more than 20 years after the events. When we study the contemporary sources, we come very close to the development, sometimes on a day to day basis, and we even discern some of his feelings, including anguish at certain occasions.<sup>20</sup>

Let us now, with help from contemporary sources, see what happened in Kenya 1939.

<sup>16</sup> When this was written, the famous novel *Out of Africa* had just been published. It was written by a Danish author, Karen Blixen, who had been married to a Swedish baronet. They had been (rather unsuccessful!) coffee farmers near Nairobi.

<sup>17</sup> BVMBV 1926:89 ff

<sup>18</sup> The SLM Chairman was not surprised by the fact that God is powerful, only by recognizing that God was using an Italian Jesuit priest. This priest didn't want to use confiscated mission property in Addis Abeba ("spoils of war"); instead he was

willing to pay SLM generously for the property. The stand of the Mission Board was: No agreement without compensation for *all* mission property. The deliberations with Italian representatives started in Sweden 1936 and the agreement was finalized in Ethiopia in 1938; Svensson, BV 1911-1961, p. 153 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Svensson, BV 1911-1961, p. 152-161

<sup>20</sup> The most important documents concerning this journey are found in the SLM archives; many letters written during the journey are found there, both those intended for publi-

cation (gradually printed in BVMT 1939) and those not intended for the public. A certain folder in the Archives is of unique interest: Through a number of letters, often written daily, Svensson reports back to Stockholm (E 1 f:6, folder "A.B. Svenssons besök i Etiopien och Kenya 1938-39"; MBVA, RA). Some of the letters show that Svensson spent his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday (Febr. 2, 1939) travelling on the Red Sea! – An interesting extract from a devotional book, acting as a private diary of Svensson, was published in BVJ 1990:56 ff.

... it is not Kisumu which is the central place in the Kavirondo district close to which we expect to get a [mission] field. Rather it is called Kisii and is located between the river Kuja in the south and the Kavirondo [Winam] Gulf in the north. I almost sense that the Lord will lead us there. Perhaps the star, which has gone ahead of us during the whole journey, will stop there.<sup>1</sup>

LETTER BY AXEL B. SVENSSON  
(FROM NAIROBI TO THE SLM HEAD OFFICE IN STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN), FEBR, 11, 1939

## 7. The gift of God – a new mission field! 1939

**WHEN THE TWO DELEGATES** left Sweden on Sept. 25, 1938 – without knowing whether they would be able to return to Sweden again before World War II had started or not – they had been given diplomatic passports issued by the Swedish Foreign Office, as well as recommendation letters from the Swedish Royal House, the Swedish Foreign Office and the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden, Dr. Erling Eidem. The Archbishop even received Mr. Axel B. Svensson and Mr. Anton Jönsson in Uppsala, giving them God's blessings before the journey.<sup>2</sup>

No one can be surprised that the journey turned out to be a tremendous success!

### The delegates

The delegates sent by the Mission Board of the Swedish Lutheran Mission were two of the most experienced persons within the organization, one in the administration and the other one as an active missionary in the field.

*Axel B. Svensson*, one of the founders of SLM in 1911, was secretary of the SLM Board up to 1930, and from 1930 up to his death in 1967 Board Chairman.<sup>3</sup> He was, without any comparison, the most influential man in this mission society for



Axel B. Svensson



Anton Jönsson

more than 50 years. He was also well known within the Church of Sweden as a lay preacher, journalist and author, and especially known for stressing the inerrancy of the Bible and a clear Lutheran confessional position. – All together he made three journeys to Ethiopia, all of them documented in the official Mission paper (*Bibeltrogna Vänners Missionstidning*), but also in books published after returning home.<sup>4</sup> This was, however, his only visit to Kenya.

*Anton Jönsson*, often called Mose Anton (after the French expression *Monsieur Anton*), is one of the most experienced SLM missionaries ever,

1 For the context of this statement, see note 18, p. 74, below; for a similar statement about the "star" from God, see note 15

2 Svensson, *BV 1911-1961*, p. 154, 159

3 Svensson is an interesting personality in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Church life in Sweden, active as a lay preacher, religious journalist and mission visionary. In fact, he deserves

a major study on his own! So far, there is only a quite brief biography dealing with his life by Elsa Bengtsson, *Axel B. Svensson*, published in 1979.

4 The titles of the books about Ethiopia by Axel B. Svensson: *Genom Abessinien med expresståg och karavan* (1930, 3 editions); *Abessinien under italienarna. Iakttagelser*

och intryck under nya färder i landet oktober 1938 – januari 1939 (1939); *Det återuppståndna Etiopien eller Abessinien nu och förr* (1948). – It made a great impression on him when travelling in Galla territory (cf. Svensson, *BV 1911-1961*, p. 106).



A postcard written by Axel B. Svensson from Nairobi, Febr. 7, 1939. He must have been a bit confused, because he believed that he sent a picture of Mt. Kilimanjaro when, in fact, it showed Mt. Kenya. – Postcard in the SLM Archives

serving in Ethiopia 1920–56. He was a respected missionary and even had close connections with Emperor Haile Selassie.<sup>5</sup> – He visited Kenya several times and for many years served as the SLM field secretary for Africa.<sup>6</sup> He even worked in Kenya for some years, 1939–42, during WW II. However, he never worked among the Kenyans, only among Ethiopian refugees, which is no surprise considering his love for the Ethiopian people!

### The search for a new field

The first part of the journey took the two travellers to Ethiopia; they left Trelleborg in Sweden on Sept. 25, 1938. When the Ethiopian business was solved, so successfully that Svensson was interviewed by *The Times* in London about it, they started their journey to Kenya.<sup>7</sup>

They left Djibouti on Jan. 29, 1939, arriving in Mombasa on Febr. 4<sup>th</sup>.<sup>8</sup> They came to Nairobi the following day; after that they began to travel quite extensively in this country.

IN A LETTER WRITTEN Febr. 11<sup>th</sup>, Svensson stated that they had visited Ft. Hall (today: Murang'a), Nyeri, Nanyuki, Isiolo, Meru and Machakos.<sup>9</sup> (According to Svensson, Meru was “the most beautiful and nice place” he had ever visited in his life; he had just turned 60 years old when he made that statement!<sup>10</sup>) The only success during that trip seems to have been the visit to Isiolo. Their aim there was to investigate the situation among the Ethiopian refugees in Kenya. Jönsson received a work permit and a few months later, he returned to Kenya (arriving in June), where he started a ministry which lasted up to 1942.

5 He was trained in Sweden as a primary school teacher. After a short medical training in London he served as a medical doctor in Ethiopia – as refugee worker among Ethiopian refugees in Kenya – as a field secretary of SLM for Africa, at the same time serving part time as a chief librarian of the Ethiopian National Library (Svensson, *BV 1911–1961*, p. 98 f, 126, 176, 182). An extraordinary career! He retired as a missionary in 1956 and died in 1968. His wife Edith served even longer than him as a missionary, 1914–1956, although she stayed home in Sweden some years when he was in Africa. She died in 1971; cf. *Guds ord och löfte skall bestå...*, p. 121.

6 As far as I can see, he and Gunnar Nils-

son (another missionary in Ethiopia) are the only ones who have served in that position. The work in Kenya grew rapidly and became independent from the Ethiopian work quite early.

7 This agreement is special for two reasons: 1. Part of the money given to SLM was secretly handed over to the Ethiopian emperor by SLM, because he had financed certain of the buildings. 2. When SLM later returned to Ethiopia, the mission property (which Italy had paid for!) was handed back to the mission society. In this way the Fascists, unknowingly, financially supported both Haile Selassie and SLM. They even paid the whole African journey, including the trip to Kenya! (Svensson, *BV*

*1911–1961*, p. 155 ff)

8 A summary of the journey is given in Svensson, *BV 1911–1961*, p. 159 ff; an even better, and contemporary, summary is found in *BVJ 1940:127–157*. Other contemporary sources with many details are found in the mission paper, *BVMT 1939:44 ff, 50 ff, 68 ff*; cf. the annual report, *BVMBV 1938:86 ff*. Some interesting details are published in *BVJ 1990:56 ff*. Information intended for the Mission Board is found in letters (*E 1 f:6; MBVA, RA*).

9 The following letter references are taken from the SLM Archives (letters of 6, 7, 11 Febr., in: *E 1 f:6; MBVA, RA*)



The letters of Svensson (especially Febr. 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>) indicate that the journey was emotionally tough. Early in February, from Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> onwards, he had been down in a “marsh of despair” (*misströstans tråk*, Swe.), crying to God “from the depths”. One reason for his feelings might be that their original plans of where to go in Kenya began to look as a failure. Febr. 7<sup>th</sup> seems, however, to have brought a turning point – later that day he began to praise God.

It is also evident that Svensson, as an SLM representative, felt a kind of competition with other mission societies,<sup>11</sup> especially the other Swedish Lutheran body, SEM. In some letters written to the home office in Sweden, and never made public, he had problems in restraining himself: He was happy with the good treatment he and Jönsson had received – and not very unsatisfied with the rather harsh treatment given to the SEM delegates who had visited Kenya a couple of years earlier, as we have seen.<sup>12</sup>

Gradually, Svensson and Jönsson started to understand that the trip to eastern and central Kenya perhaps hadn't been so bad after all. Perhaps that is the reason why the mood of Svensson started to change: A new alternative began to appear as a possibility!

The original plans, which the two delegates had been forced to discard at an early stage, were to start working among the *Maasai* or *Turkana*.<sup>13</sup> Another plan, to go to *Kitui*, lasted a few days longer, but after some journeys in Kenya they were

forced to give up that plan as well. Mr. Nixon, the field secretary of Africa Inland Mission, managed to convince them that SLM was too small a body to succeed with such a tough work. Instead he recommended them to continue to the Lake area, to the Kisii tribe.<sup>14</sup>

One year later, in a very interesting summary of their trip, Axel B. Svensson wrote in this way:

Both Jönsson and I felt convinced [when meeting Mr. Nixon, the leader of Africa Inland Mission], that we here received a sign from the finger of God. For me it was even more certain, as I that very morning had received a letter from my eldest son. In that he stressed, that the Lord God for sure would let his star show me and Jönsson, where to find the new mission field of S. l. He also advised me to follow the recommendation, even if it would look foolish. It was this letter which made me participate in the journey to Machakos, which had looked so useless to me. And when I now sat there, and heard Mr. Nixon talking about Kavirondo, I almost felt that here I had the star which I ought to follow, and it pointed in the direction of Kavirondo.<sup>15</sup>

They also had consulted Bishop Crabbe (who recently had become the Anglican Bishop of Mombasa),<sup>16</sup> the Field Secretary of CMS, the Chief Secretary of the Governor of Kenya. All advice they received pointed in just one direction – the Kisii area.

By the weekend (Febr. 11<sup>th</sup>), the SLM delegates were convinced that they remained with just two

10 He even compared its beauty with the “garden of Eden”; Svensson, in: *BVJ* 1940: 144 f

11 According to Svensson, the (South African) Dutch Reformed Church had an investigation team in Kenya by this time; they, too, expressed an interest of going to Kisiiland (letter of Febr. 11<sup>th</sup>).

12 Especially in one letter (Febr. 7, 1939) he had problems in restraining himself. He noted that he and Jönsson had received a warm welcome in Isiolo, while the SEM representatives had been refused even to enter the town (situated in an area with restricted travelling). The SEM representatives had not succeeded in their investigations in Kenya but been recommended to go to Tanganyika, while SLM had been

well treated. He also talked of the “lies” of people belonging to SEM. Statements of this kind are, otherwise, not common in his correspondence. – His despair lasted from Sunday to Tuesday morning; on Tuesday afternoon, he began to feel very optimistic. 13 Jönsson had favoured work among the Turkana, and Svensson among the Maasai, *BVMT* 1939:68. Why? It is evident that Jönsson wanted to be as close to his beloved Ethiopians as possible. Why, then, did Svensson want SLM to go to the Maasai tribe? It has been suggested that it was because of a romantic trait in his character (conversation in 1995 with the previous SLM Mission Director P-E Ingvert). I am rather willing to believe that!

14 *BVMBV* 1938:89 f. – It has to be noted

that these events, which took place in early 1939, confusingly enough are reported in the annual report for 1938 (printed in early 1939). This indicates their importance.

15 Axel B. Svensson, in: *BVJ* 1940:152. Mr. Nixon had even been praying to God, asking him to send a Protestant mission to the Kisii tribe. Nixon also informed them that some chiefs from South Kavirondo [the Kisii area] had asked AIM to start a work among them, which they had not been able to do. – In 1961 Svensson wrote that Mr. Nixon had said: “And now... the star has led you here, and you have to go to Kisii.” (Svensson, *BV* 1911–1961, p. 160.) That statement I have not been able to confirm in any contemporary source.

16 *Rabai to Mumias*, p. 18 ff, esp. p. 25



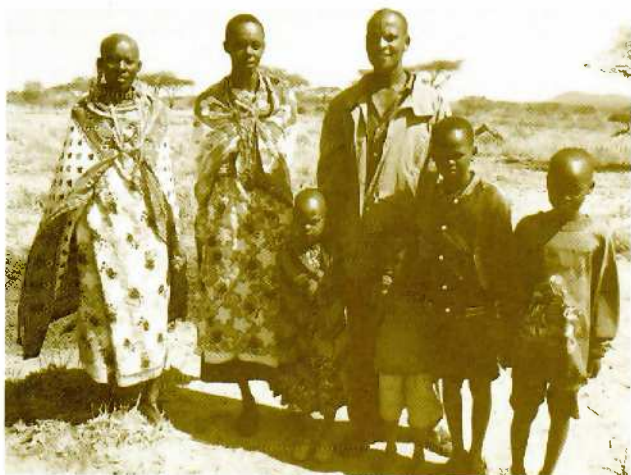
alternatives in Kenya. If they failed, they had to turn to Rwanda or Tanganyika.<sup>17</sup>

The most interesting alternative was the Kisii area, the second best “the English society of Dawkins” (i.e., BCMS). But gradually Svensson got the impression that God would lead them to Kisii-land – and that their mission would be successful. He wrote home to the SLM office:

I must correct myself or make myself more clear: It is not Kisumu which is the central place in the Kavirondo district close to which we expect to get a [mission] field. Rather it is called Kisii and is situated between the river Kuja in the south and the Kavirondo [Winam] Gulf in the north. I almost sense that the Lord will lead us there. Perhaps the star, which has led us during the whole journey, will stop there.<sup>18</sup>

By this time, no mission society was granted permission to commence work without an express request from the “natives”. A few days later, when

Originally SLM planned to work among the Maasai. It took some decades for the Maasai ministry to begin. Here a Maasai evangelist, 2004



they had received permission in Nairobi to approach the District Commissioner (DC) in Kisii as well as some Kisii chiefs, they left New Stanley hotel, where they had been staying.

Svensson and Jönsson started their journey to Western Kenya. They were trembling – and requesting prayers from the Christians at home.

UP TO 1939, no Protestant mission work had been established among the *Abagusii*. Roman Catholics and Seventh Day Adventists had been working there since the beginning of the century. Both AIM and the Anglicans were therefore quite happy to see a Lutheran mission entering Kisii-land.

An interesting question is this: Why was the Kisii area suggested so unanimously by different mission leaders and Church officials? The Swedish sources have understood it as a wise and generous suggestion, while another explanation has been suggested from a Kenyan perspective: Perhaps other Protestants didn't want to have any competition in the areas where they were already working?!<sup>19</sup>

The gift from God – a new mission field!

We are able to follow the events in the Kisii area in Febr. 1939 in a very detailed way. They are described almost on a daily basis by Mr. Svensson in reports to the SLM mission paper and in his letters to the Mission office at home.<sup>20</sup>

On Febr. 15<sup>th</sup>, they came to Kisii town. The following day they visited the District Commissioner (DC). He recommended them to travel in the area, assisted by a soldier as their guide, and return to him on the 21<sup>st</sup>.<sup>21</sup>

The DC was very interested in getting Swedish Lutherans to enter the area – for a rather peculiar reason: The colonial authorities felt that the Seventh Day Adventist members caused confusion

17 Letters by Axel B. Svensson, Febr. 11 and 6, 1939 (*E 1 f:6; MBVA, RA*)

18 “Jag ska rätta mig eller förtydliga: det är icke Kisumu, som är den centrala plats i Kavirondodistriktet, i vilkens närhet vi hoppas få ett fält, utan den platsen heter Kisii och ligger mellan floden Kuja i söder och Kavirondogolfen i norr. Det är inte utan än [att?] jag liksom känner, att Herren

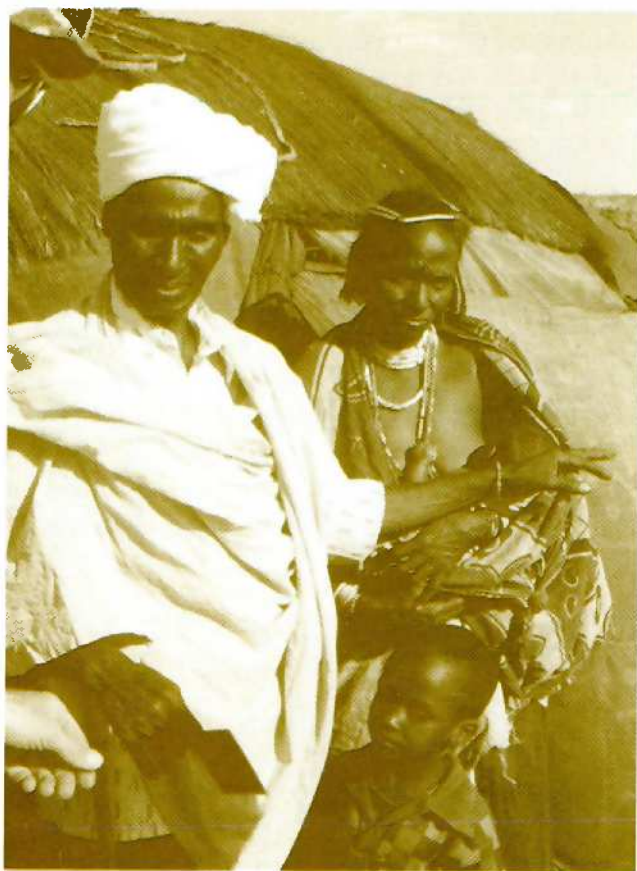
vill leda oss dit. Kanske skall stjärnan, som gått före oss hela resan, stanna där.” (Letter by Svensson, Febr. 11, 1939; *E 1 f:6; MBVA, RA*) – Svensson is making a reference to Matt. 2:9; cf. a similar Bible reference made by him (above, p. 53, note 4)

19 This explanation was suggested by Rev. Nicholas Oenga at the ELCK History Seminar arranged at MLTC in March 2007. It

could also be very accurate!

20 *BVMT* 1939:50–54 and 68–70; cf letters by Svensson, Febr. 1939 (*E 1 f:6; MBVA, RA*)

21 Letter by Svensson, written from “Kisii Boma” on Febr. 18/21, 1939 (*E 1 f:6; MBVA, RA*)



A Borana couple from northern Kenya. Anton Jönsson wanted SLM to work here – but it took 40 years before ELCK started up its work

in the area because of their refusal to keep Sunday as a day of rest. With a Lutheran mission in the area, it would be easier to give the Sundays their proper position!

The Swedish delegates travelled extensively in the district, and felt welcomed by the people. The information they had received was that the Kisii tribe consisted of 120.000 people in a province with 360.000 inhabitants. They were very happy with the climate and commented in their letters on

the high altitude of the area (between 1400 and 2000 metres above sea level).

Almost immediately when reaching the Kisii area Axel B. Svensson began to get the feeling: *This is our field*. Later he understood that the area he passed through was the Nyaribari location.<sup>22</sup>

ON FEBR. 21<sup>ST</sup>, the Swedish delegates met the DC and the chiefs from three different locations: *Njabaro* from Wanjare, *Chiboga* from Kitutu and *Musa* from Nyaribari. It was decided that *barazas* (local assemblies; Swa.) would be held on Febr. 27<sup>th</sup>.<sup>23</sup>

Starting with Wanjare, the inhabitants in every location, all of them close to Kisii town, had a kind of “referendum” whether to welcome the new mission or not.<sup>24</sup> The first *baraza* was held at 9 a.m., the second at 11 a.m., the third at 2 p.m. – How the deliberations, including transport, could be made with such a speed is really surprising! It can also be noted that four languages were used (Swedish, English, Swahili, Ekegusii). Svensson even commented: “It was really a speaking with tongues”.<sup>25</sup>

The order of the meetings was as follows: First the Swedish representatives were given a possibility to address the people – then questions were raised by persons present, and certain promises given by the Swedish delegates – finally a decision was made whether to welcome the new mission or not.

We can note four interesting facts:

- The question what the new mission could offer was raised – it had to compete with the SDA and Roman Catholic Churches. Svensson promised that SLM would build not only schools but also a hospital.<sup>26</sup> Later SLM built several clinics (dispensaries), but it took some 45 years for a (sub-) hospital to materialize at Itierio, and that came through the efforts of ELCK and not SLM.

- Although Svensson wrote to Sweden about the Kisii people as “heathens”, it can be noted that

22 Letter by Svensson, written from “Kisii Boma” on Febr. (18) 21, 1939 (E 1 f:6; MBVA, RA)

23 I have used the spelling utilized by Svensson but tried to eliminate mistakes influenced from Swedish, e. g. *Chibāga* (letter by Svensson, Febr. 18/21 1939, E 1 f:6;

MBVA, RA). – Concerning the boundaries of these three locations, see W. R. Ochieng’, *A Pre-colonial History of the Gusii of Western Kenya...*, p. 85

24 According to the laws in Kenya by this time, it depended on local population and not on the colonial officers whether a new

mission could enter or not. Svensson noted that the system was the same as when St. Ansgar brought the Christian faith to Sweden in the 9<sup>th</sup> century (letter, Febr. 18/21 1939, E 1 f:6; MBVA, RA).

25 BVMT 1939:53

26 BVMT 1948:101





The Subhospital at Itierio – it took some 45 years for it to materialize!

several *theological issues* were raised. The chief Musa asked: What was the baptismal practice of SLM? Did they baptize in rivers, in the houses or in churches? Did SLM recognize both Testaments, or only the Old Testament, as the Word of God?<sup>27</sup>

- Another question was raised but its content was never brought home to Sweden; it had to do with *smoking and drinking*. The SLM representatives were asked about their attitude to these things. Svensson answered as follows: Some persons within SLM were smoking; in fact Svensson himself was a smoker but not Jönsson. Concerning alcohol, weak beverages (like *svagdricka*, Swe.) were often used by some SLM members, but not strong alcohol.<sup>28</sup>

- Svensson was surprised by the outcome. He had felt that God had led them to Kisii-land with the Wanjare-Itierio alternative being the least likely – and now that was the place where the outcome turned out to be the best.

SVENSSON WROTE LATER that very day, Febr. 27<sup>th</sup>, that he had feared the outcome of these meetings, because two of the chiefs were Roman Catholics.

However, all meetings were quite successful, and SLM was welcomed to all three locations. The most positive response was given by the Wanjare people, where the decision was unanimous and the mission body was offered a plot immediately. Consequently, the SLM representatives decided to build a mission station there.

THE FOLLOWING DAY, Febr. 28<sup>th</sup>, a plot at Itierio was handed over to the Swedish representatives – some youths even added their football field to the area! – and the title deed was signed. Really a very rapid development! Svensson even expressed a hope that the building work on the station could start half a year later, in September 1939.<sup>29</sup>

BEFORE LEAVING THESE ISSUES, let us note three interesting details:

- Of course, only a few *Abagusii* were committed Christians in the late 1930's, but it can be misleading to describe them as *heathens* without any knowledge at all about Christian faith and tradition. Quite many of them had a certain theological knowledge, even concerning important confessional issues, e.g. baptismal practices.

- From the very beginning we can note: The *Abagusii* have never passively received the teaching from the SLM missionaries. The strict attitude towards alcohol and tobacco is not only a consequence of the (pietistic) tradition of SLM, but also a consequence of an ethical stand taken at a very early stage by the Kisii Christians (pastors, evangelists, laymen). But, considering that so many of early Kisii Lutherans had a background within the Seventh Day Adventist community, could it in fact be an SDA influence? A number of the first Lutheran Christians in the Kisii community had an SDA background.<sup>30</sup>

27 Letter by Svensson, Febr. 18/21 1939, E 1 f:6; MBVA, RA. – In a manuscript to the mission paper (in a section which he himself deleted and which was not printed), he complained that these legalistic questions indicated the level of the work done by those who up to now had been missionaries to the Kisii tribe: "They have shown themselves to be incompetent teachers to the heathens." (Concerning this manuscript, cf. the next note, below.)

28 The original, *typed* letter by Svensson shows that these questions were raised, but this section of the letter has been erased with a *pencil*. When the letter was published in the mission paper, the erased section was never printed. Consequently, the SLM members in Sweden were informed about the questions related to baptismal practices etc., but not concerning the issue of smoking and drinking. – Cf. the letter by Svensson (dated 27/2, 1939, E 1

f:6; MBVA, RA) with the printed article, BVMT 1939:53.

29 BVMT 1939:52 ff, BVMBV 1938:90–93, Svensson, BV 1911–1961, p. 160. – In one letter, Svensson also compares the Abagusii with the Galla (Oromo) and the Abyssinians (Ethiopians); BVMT 1939:53

30 That was also confirmed when I made a number of interviews at Itierio and Matongo in Dec. 2006 and Jan. 2007



## Ett nytt missionsfält.

Kisii boma den 27 febr. 1930.

Kära Missionärer, Guds frid!

alle må tacka Herren för hans nåd och för hans under med människors harn. Dess ord upprepas flera gånger i Ps. 107, och av allt mitt hjärta vill jag i dag göra den till min och till ert alla lilla missions-sällskaps. Ty i sanning har Herren bevisat oss nycken under och bört våra fattiga hönor, gjort under och hjälpt vida över våra tankar och förhoppningar. Ja, han har bevisat obegripligt mycken barmhärtighet!

Det har nu gått omkring tre veckor, sedan vi i Herrens Jesu namn stego i land i Mombasa för att här i Kenya Colony söka ett arbetsfält för våra mission. Här hade underbekant några stora förhoppningar. Huru i Sverige hade jag tagit del av en så mycket ganska bra framställning av missionsförhållandena i denna engelska besittning, och den ingav inte vidare stora förhoppningar. Därför var det närmast intressant att vi skulle söka ett fält i denna sådana av de engelska kolonierna eller på beläget område här i östra delen av det ekvatoriala Afrika. Det syntes det både missionär Jönsson och mig följande att begynda i Kenya, detta så mycket mera, som vi även ville söka kontakten med de afrikanska flyktlingarna härvidles.

Både hade vi disussion var sin plan på fullföljelse av förbättrade arbete här. Mina tankar rörde till det tappet och intelligenta Massafolket, som i så många planer och på själva gränsen till Abyssinien.

För att på detta vägar och få så fullständiga upplysningar som möjligt stände vi oss för först och främst till vederbörande myndighet i Nairobi och främmande vår gemensamma utrikesdepartementet utverka de introduktion från Foreign Office i London. Det lönar sig säga sig själv, att vi blev väl mottagna och fingo veta, att man redan skickat utredningen till de olika provinsstyrelserna och befallt dem underlätta våra undersökningar och färder. Man sade också, att det fanns gott om plats för ytter-

ligare mission och gav en besked om de formaliteter, som voro att iakttaga för att få begynda. Och så hänvisade man oss till några sakkunniga, som kände missionsförhållandena här.

Vi besökte alltså engelska kyrkomissions-sällskaps fältskötare och bikopen av Mombasa, vilka båda herrar också mottogo oss hjärtligt, gävo oss värdefulla råd och visst inte några våra planer med oblika ås. Bikopen nedskallade Guds välsignelse över oss och önskade oss framgång.

Vårt första besök, gällde Isolo i Northern Frontier Province. Några mil norr därom ligger den camp, i vilken omkring 6.000 shesudiska flyktlingar vistas. Vi hade med oss brev från kolonialsekreteraren i Nairobi till vederbörande District Commissioner, och det betydde mycket liksom även missionär Jönssons personliga bekantskap med den engelske missionsären Stokes, som arbetar bland flyktlingarna. Jag skatt emellertid ej i detta sammanhang berätta något vidare om besöket i Isolo utan inkränka mig till att säga, att vi återvände till Nairobi medförande en skrivelse från Mr. Stokes, till kolonialsekreteraren. På den framsändningen, som varit ute på remiss, ha vi ännu inte fått något svar.

Men där uppe i Isolo fingo vi besked angående utskriften för ett område bland Turkamfolket. Det är ett månalarstätt folk på omkring 70 tusen. Det torde bli värt problematiskt för varje europeiskt arbete bland detta folk, som där till är påverkat av islam. Landet är ökenariskt, välfattigt och har ett mycket obekänt klimat. Säkert borde dock ej få avskräcka. Men så hade för någon kortare tid sedan the little Churchmen Missionary Society (Englands Bibeltrogna Vänner) begynt arbeta bland Turkarna, och det skulle vara oförståeligt för oss att då också börja där. Även beträffande Massarna och redan befästa verk-samt bland dem hade vi erhållit sådana upplysningar, att vi voro fullt ense därom, att våra på förhand uppgjorda planer kunde skrinläggas.

Redan för avresan från Sverige hade jag i en liten engelsk publikation sett utkastet, att i Kisii distrikt ett gott stycke öster om Nairobi skulle finnas ett område befolkat av 25 tusen människor, som voro alldeles utan missionärer och lärare. Missionär Jönsson

fäste sig till i en underbekant vid denna uppgift. Han påverkade och jag var nära med om att vi skulle göra en undersökning. Uppgiften emanerar från Africa Inland Missions fältskötare i Mombasa, som ligger några mil från Nairobi. Och vi bestämde oss att ned och bota oss för.

Det beslutade fattade vi en afton. Men på natten greps jag av mässmål och vägrade lika som inte hoppas någonting. Jag kände det också onödigt, att vi båda skulle fara dit ned. Emellertid fick jag på morgonen ett brev från Sverige, varit inläsades underliga ord om sjukman, som ledde och stannade över huset, där larmet var. Och detta brev kom mig att följa med till Mombasa.

Mr. Nixon, som gav ett bestämt intryck att vara gammaldags häare, tog mycket beaktligt emot oss och gav oss de begärda upplysningarna. Men han fick under samtalet höra, att vårt sällskap är litet och har begränsade tillgångar både på personer och pengar. Han sade då: "Ni ska inte gå till Kisii, ty klimatet är mycket ohälsosamt. Ni ska gå till Kavirondo vid Victoria Nyanen och Kisii distrikt. Där be över 120 tusen beboare, och där finns ingen säll evangelisk mission. Katolikerna arbeta där och adventisterna, men det har ingen evangeliska kretsar här i Kenya ännu varit ett jämnat, ett ett sällskap, som har evangelium att förkunna för folket, skulle begynda där. Africa Inland Mission har varken personer eller pengar för ytterligare utvidgning, och så är det även med andra missioner, som ha varit sitt område."

Både bröder Jönsson och jag kände det som en underlig Guds ledning. Våra planer voro slut. Vi hade också läst någonting, att här i denna välfäga koloni, som omfattar ett stort antal länder och folk, ej skulle vara utrymme för något nytt missionsföretag och att de sällskap, som redan arbetat här, hade blivit uttrötta. Men så hade vi i Kisii distrikt ett gott stycke öster om Nairobi skulle finnas ett område befolkat av 25 tusen människor, som voro alldeles utan missionärer och lärare. Missionär Jönsson

Svens engelskmissionen togo hand om Kenya var det tillåtet för missionerna att så sig ned till var de ville. Sedan dess har kolonialregeringens missionspolitik av vissa skillnader löst betydligt. De gamla missionerna få sitta kvar, där de väglit sig ned. Men när det gäller nya eller områden, där ingen mission funnits, så tycker man icke vilja ha mera än en protestantisk mission inom varje distrikt. Och så kunde man ju befara regeringens representant i Kisii distrikt komma att vara oss, att där redan funns adventistisk mission och katolik och att det var mer än nog.

Men även om den engelske District Commissioner skulle vara beredd att tillstyrka en vår begäran att få börja arbeta i Kavirondo, så var det inte så säkert, att vi ändå skulle få det. Regeringen beviljar nämligen inte tillåtelse att anlägga någon missionsstation, såvida icke infödingarna d. v. s. beboarna själva begära det. Men sker det, så pågår som regel tillåtelse givas. Men huru skulle vi två stackare kunna vänta, att ledningarna i Kavirondo skulle säga till engelska regeringens representant: "Vi begära, att Missions-sällskapet Bibeltrogna Vänner missionärer ska komma hit och arbeta ibland oss. Det syntes åtminstone mest alldeles onödigt."

Vi kommo till Kisii boma den 13 de på aftonen och besökte dagen därpå den engelske District Commissioner, som är en mycket sympatisk man. Han hade varit introduktionsbrev från kolonialsekreteraren, och sen han hört vår tank och blickan att grunda en mission här, sade han ungefär följande:

"Inom Kisii distrikt finns ju både katolik och adventistisk mission, men här är mycket folk och goda om plats, och jag har inte enot, att här kommer en protestantisk mission, som här folket att fira söndagen och inte beboarna som adventisterna."

I fortsättningen framhöll han, att han inte ville uttala sig något om några doktriner eller trosbekännelser. Men adventisternas kyrkaförning hade berett en hel del svårigheter för regeringen, som ju i sin tjänst

— och under tiden i Kenya året 1927 överbevisades över hela kolonin och närmast under samma Province Commissioner samt därpå District Commissioner. South Kavirondo distrikt har 200 tusen beboare.

"A new mission field." On the very same day as the agreement was made, Febr. 27, 1939, Axel B. Svensson wrote home to Sweden about it. Copy of the article in the SLM mission paper

• This means that every ethical stand must be analysed on its own merit. Within ELCK, the attitude towards *polygamy* has always been negative, and the Kenyan Christians have taken the same stands as the missionaries – but concerning *circumcision* many ELCK Christians are often more positive than the Lutheran missionaries. (We will return to this issue!)

VERY HAPPY, and praising God for the outcome, the two delegates left for Kisumu, from where they started their journey back to Sweden.

It can, however, be noted that at least Svensson privately had very strong doubts, in fact almost all the time. First he doubted the possibility of succeeding in getting a new mission field and later,

when the agreement had been made, whether it would really work.

These doubts were never expressed in the official documents, but they are easily seen in private letters,<sup>31</sup> and also in a small devotional book, *Dagens lösen*, which partly acted as a diary. In his diary he indicated twice that he had felt a deep anguish. The first time was in Kisii town (Febr. 19<sup>th</sup>), the second time was after having arrived in Kisumu, March 2<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>32</sup>

It is also interesting to note that Svensson now began to interpret the problems that Swedish Lutheran Mission had met in Ethiopia as something permitted by God in order to bring the Gospel to the Kisii-land:

31 Private letter from Axel B. Svensson to Nils Nilsson, Nosabyholm, Sweden: "We were very happy and grateful yesterday evening. / Now a lot of formalities remain, and the whole thing *can* still be overturned, because nothing is really totally certain here on earth. However, it is still true, that if our Lord God has decided to open [a door], then no one can close it... Now it seems

to me to be a big shame to doubt the final outcome through the English authorities. But – I am so weak in my faith." (Letter belonging to Mrs. Eva Ragnarsson [Kristianstad, Sweden] dated "Kisii boma", Febr. 28, 1939; copy in PART)

32 BVJ 1990:56 ff, esp. p. 64 f. He underlined some Bible references in the book; that indicates how the Bible passages spoke

to him. On Febr. 27<sup>th</sup>, the days of the three *barazas*, he underlined Psalm 69:17(18). – As we have seen, above, his letters from Nairobi early in February show that he often felt despair while staying there.

These days I understand much better than before the guidance of the Lord with our mission in Abyssinia. It was not *only* because of chastisement that we were pushed away from there. It was also in order to make us to continue [bringing the Word of God] to peoples with even greater need of the Gospel. According to Acts [8:1] it was through persecution and troubles that the Lord forced the apostles to go out, not remaining seated in only Jerusalem. Both the Lord and his disciples are the same throughout the ages.<sup>33</sup>

The delegates returned home to Sweden as soon as possible.

On april 12, 1939, the Mission Board made an unanimous decision “in the name of the Lord” to commence mission work, without delay, in Kenya.<sup>34</sup> That date is, therefore, one of the “birthdays” of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya – another one, of course, being Febr. 27, 1939, when the inhabitants of Wanjare decided to welcome SLM in their area.

**THE RECONNAISSANCE TRIP** undertaken by the SLM representatives sent to Kenya was really very successful. After having travelled around in Kenya for a week or so, they went to Kisii, and there they were very efficient. They came so “easily” to Itierio, that it almost resembles a missile hitting its fixed target!

But other Swedish Lutherans had also been travelling in Kenya, two years earlier – and their journey had a totally different outcome.

In May 1937, the Swedish Evangelical Mission had sent an investigation team to East Africa. The original plan was to continue with the Galla (Oromo) ministry, but now in Kenya. They didn’t succeed, however, and the welcome they received wasn’t very warm.

They came to spend three months on journeys – visiting several countries (Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanganyika) – investigating one possibility after another, and they were regularly discouraged. Finally, after having travelled 7000 kilometres by car and long distances on train, they came to Iringa in Tanganyika where they found the doors to be open for an SEM ministry.<sup>35</sup> Later, several of the missionaries who had worked in Somalia were transferred to Tanganyika.<sup>36</sup>

**IN KENYA, GOD OPENED** the doors for the Swedish Lutheran Mission. A couple of years earlier, the Swedish Evangelical Mission found the doors closed in Kenya – but they were opened in *Tanganyika*!

Why did God act like that? That is a question which we will never be able to explain, we can just realize the facts. But *how* he did it, that is an interesting story, as we have seen.

In the next chapter, we will study what happened with the development which began at Itierio in 1939. That is a *very* interesting story, in fact without an end – because, after almost 70 years, *it is still going on*!

33 Private letter to Nils Nilsson, Febr. 28, 1939 (cf. note 31, above)

34 BVMT 1939:69. – The word “Kaviron-do” is never used today. The *Kavirondo area* seems to stand for today’s Nyanza

(and Western) Provinces, while the “Kaviron-do” tribe stands for the Luos. When Svensson in BVMT 1939:53 talks of the “Kisii dialect of the Kavirondo [Luo] language”, it is sheer nonsense, *Ekegusii* being

a Bantu language and *Dholuo* a Nilotic.

35 Cf. Tafvelin, *Ut i all världen*, p. 153 ff; cf. also note 10, p. 54, above

36 Cf. Tafvelin, *Ut i all världen*, p. 161 f

“A door had been opened for Bibletrue Friends in Kenya,  
and in 1942 the door to Ethiopia was opened once more.  
But – the world war had broken out, soon after  
the opening of the first door...”

AXEL B. SVENSSON (1961) ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA.<sup>1</sup>

## 8. The work is delayed, 1939–1947

### The refugee work in Kenya starts while the “Kavirondo” work gets stuck

Before leaving the Kisii area, Svensson publicly expressed a hope that SLM could commence its work at Itierio in September 1939, i.e. after half a year.<sup>2</sup> Privately, however, he had some doubts. As we have seen, it only took him a couple of days to fall down into a kind of depression once more. When starting his return journey to Sweden, he passed Kisumu. On March 2 he noted in his devotional book that he was anguished, summarizing his feelings with just two words: “Kisumu, ångest” (*anguish*, Swe.). But we can presume that he, just like two weeks earlier in the town of Kisii,<sup>3</sup> was comforted by God – because the Bible reading for that day was Hebr. 4:16! In fact, his diary notes end that very day in Kisumu.<sup>4</sup>

It didn’t take just half a year for the ministry among the Kisii to start – it took *nine years*. The

reason was, of course, not only the outbreak of World War II but also the development in Ethiopia and a number of decisions by the SLM Board concerning its work there.

ON APRIL 12, 1939, the Mission Board in Stockholm made a historic decision:<sup>5</sup> *to open a new mission field, in Kenya*.<sup>6</sup> Immediately they also started to make plans for the work.

The work was treated as having two parts, one in “Kavirondo” (today we would say *Nyanza*, or *Kisiiland*), and the other one among Ethiopian refugees, beginning at Isiolo.<sup>7</sup>

The refugee work in Kenya could start immediately. After having spent just some ten weeks in Sweden, Jönsson returned to Kenya in June 1939. Because of his haste he managed to enter the country before the war made such journeys almost impossible.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Svensson, *BV 1911–1961*, p. 163 (cf. also the heading of p. 159)

<sup>2</sup> *BVMT 1939:52 ff*, *BVMBV 1945:55*

<sup>3</sup> On Febr. 19, when he had written even more strongly (“Kisii, deep anguish”), that very day the Bible reading was Is. 66:12!

<sup>4</sup> *BVJ 1990:65*. – It is no surprise that his feelings went up and down. The journey must have been one of the toughest in his life: He had been travelling for half a year (he left Sweden in Sept. 1938 and came back in March 1939; *BVJ 1990:58 ff*), he was without his family, he was 60 years old – and World War II could start any day!

<sup>5</sup> As we have seen, the SLM work in Eritrea and Ethiopia came as a consequence of the split within SEM. That means it was not the result of long discussions, investigations and deliberations. The decision of 1939 was consequently the first of its kind. <sup>6</sup> “At the meeting on April 12<sup>th</sup>, the [Mission] Board decided unanimously ‘in the name of the Lord without delay to commence mission work on the new field among the heathens in Kavirondo.’” (*BVMT 1939:69*)

<sup>7</sup> *BVMBV 1939:93*; *BVMT 1939:68 ff*

<sup>8</sup> My impression is that the haste was more motivated from the side of Jönsson himself,

than from his superiors. That is also very logical, given the general political situation in Europe. The Board was not interested in making any decision which could put the missionaries in danger. On the other hand, if Jönsson personally was eager to return to Kenya in order to serve the Ethiopian refugees there, the Board did not want to forbid him to do so. – Cf. contemporary sources, e.g. *BVMT 1939:68, 106*, *BVM BV 1939:93*.



Jönsson stayed with the Ethiopian refugees, first at *Isiolo* in the *Northern Frontier Province*. Later they had to move southward because the Italians made the frontier insecure. This brought the refugees and Jönsson to *Mariakani* in the Mombasa area – quite close to where Krapf had been working 100 years before, and later to *Taveta*. For security reasons his whereabouts in Kenya were not disclosed to the public, not even to the mission friends. Even the mission papers were closely monitored by security services; consequently the editors were very careful when publishing information.<sup>9</sup> After the war it was revealed exactly where he had been in Kenya.<sup>10</sup>

Gustav Arén has described a similar situation from an SEM perspective. The policy of the mission paper of the Swedish Evangelical Mission, *Missionstidningen*, in the 1930's went like this:

“During the Italian occupation, and even earlier, political observations might now and then be struck out or rendered harmless, names and persons being replaced by descriptive expressions: *Kentiba* So-and-so might become ‘the chief’, *Em-baderho*: ‘the village’; *Hamasen*: ‘the province’; and so on.”<sup>11</sup>

When Ethiopia had been liberated in 1941, and Emperor Haile Selassie returned from his exile, Jönsson followed the Ethiopian refugees back to their country. He stayed in Ethiopia until he could be reunited with his family in Sweden after the end of WW II.

The sources indicate that although Mr. Jönsson spent several years in Kenya (1939-42), he visited Kisumu but never Itierio.<sup>12</sup> Some arrangements concerning the plot and permission to work in that area were made with the *colonial authorities*,<sup>13</sup> but SLM lost all contact with the Itierio *community*.

Jönsson was active in areas in Kenya where there has hardly been any Lutheran mission work, either before his time or later on. Considering that he was working among Ethiopian refugees, it is not surprising if his work today is totally forgotten in Kenya.<sup>14</sup>

It can also be noted that not only the Mission Board in Stockholm, but also his own family in Sweden had great problems in keeping in touch with him during the seven years when he stayed on his own in Kenya and Ethiopia. Because of the war, it could go months until his letters reached Sweden.<sup>15</sup> The information about his work published in the mission paper, *Bibeltrogna Vänners Missionstidning*, indicates that both his family and the Mission Board in Stockholm lived under a great strain because of this.<sup>16</sup>

WHILE THE REFUGEE WORK could start immediately through Mr. Jönsson, the plans for sending missionaries to the “Kavirondo” work got totally stuck.

Mr. and Mrs. Stark, who had been working in Ethiopia before the Italian occupation, were assigned by the Mission Board to work in Kenya. Mr. Stark, who had a couple of university degrees in Sweden,

9 The Swedish mission societies working in Africa were well aware of the “rules of the game” by this time; the factual information given was very often quite vague: “not far from Mombasa”, “close to Mt. Kilimanjaro” (BVMBV 1940:44; cf. BVMT 1940:132). The correspondence to and from the missionaries was read by censors (Svensson, BV 1911-1961, p. 91).

10 Cf. BVMT 1945:119 f and *Kazi ya Kikani-sa la Kilutheri katika Kenya 1948-1973*, p. 5. (The information there emanates from a letter from Sigurd Stark to LCK President James O. Nchogu, Dec. 9, 1972; copy of letter, PARI.) – The correspondence between Jönsson and the home office (official letters but addressed to “Axel”) give details about his work and travels. He was in

Kisumu July 5, 1939, in Nanyuki July 28<sup>th</sup>, in Nairobi Aug. 3<sup>rd</sup>, in Isiolo Aug. 9<sup>th</sup>. He later came to Mariakani and then Taveta. I have only glanced through some of the letters which are found in the SLM Archives (E 1 e:4; MBVA, RA); for censorship reasons they were written in English and not Swedish!

11 Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, p. 21

12 Cf. note 10, above, and BVMT 1948:99. – The proper name for the first mission station is Itierio (ib., p. 100). As the station is located on a hill in Wanjare (Bonchari) location, Mr. Svensson coined the expression “Wanjare Hill”. This name was used by SLM for many years, and was well known among the Swedish mission friends, but is

unknown among the Kenyans themselves.

13 See the correspondence from 1939-40 found in file labelled “To Provincial Commissioner in Nyanza Province 1940” (F 1:1; MBVA, RA); also BVMBV 1940:43 ff

14 Already in 1945 it was difficult to recognize exactly where he had worked! Cf. BVMT 1945:119 f.

15 A New Year's letter (written in October 1940!) arrived in March 1941; BVMBV 1940:45

16 E.g. BVMT 1940:132, 164. The most dramatic statement was made in 1944: The fact that his wife had received a telegram from “missionary Jönsson” proved that he was still alive (BVMT 1944:68)!



Sigurd and Anna Stark together with their daughters, Hanna-Karin and Eva

undertook further studies in England. He studied medicine, in order to be able to work as a doctor at Itierio, and Swahili as a general preparation.<sup>17</sup> He was also ordained in 1939 as a pastor in Church of Sweden for service in Kenya; he was ordained in Dec. 1939 by Archbishop Erling Eidem.<sup>18</sup> They couldn't leave Sweden immediately because they expected a child, and when their daughter was born a few months later, all connections with Africa had been cut off.<sup>19</sup>

Another couple, *Enok and Magda Salomonsson*, started to prepare themselves for going to Kenya. As a step towards this they even had a special missionary blessing service in Sweden in Febr. 1940.<sup>20</sup> – To make such a step is really an act of faith, and courage, both from the side of the missionaries themselves and from the Mission Board. The World War II had just started on a full scale.

Both couples, Stark and Salomonsson, were ready to go to Kenya any day – but God had other plans.<sup>21</sup>

The missionaries are, finally, sent out to Africa – but what about Kenya?

In 1941 Ethiopia was liberated. As a consequence, the SLM Board put almost all their efforts on re-opening the work there and in Eritrea, while Kenya was left for the time being.

It is quite evident that by this time Ethiopia still was the No. 1 priority for the SLM Board. All missionaries were sent there, and for practical reasons (no SLM missionaries had been in Ethiopia since 1936) quite a number of missionaries had to be sent at the same time.<sup>22</sup>

When the most urgent needs there had been covered, which took a couple of years, the Mission Board could start to plan for the situation in Kenya.

In the beginning of 1945 it was possible for Sigurd and Anna Stark to return to Africa. But – they were sent back to Ethiopia, where they had worked before. They had a very dramatic journey which took them more than four months, leaving in January 1945 and arriving in May. It involved half a dozen of countries and even three continents (Europe – South America – Africa). Although they came via Kenya, and even stayed in Nairobi some weeks, they never visited Nyanza ("Kavirondo").<sup>23</sup> It can also be noted that they, because of the war, came alone, leaving their daughters at home in Sweden; one year later the children could be reunited with their parents in Addis.<sup>24</sup>

The Salomonsson family, who had been among the first missionaries assigned to go to Kenya, were also redirected. Instead of going to Kenya as they had expected to do since 1939, they were in 1946 sent to Ethiopia in order to solve the shortage of missionaries there.<sup>25</sup> After a while, they were to be

17 BVMT 1939:69 f, BVMBV 1939:104 f; it seems that Stark was expected to work both as a doctor and a pastor! Concerning his studies and ordination, see Hylander, *Biografisk matrikel över Svenska Kyrkans Prästerskap* 1970, p. 604.

18 He was ordained so that SLM should not become dependent on other mission societies, "after suggestion by missionary Jönsson and with consent by the Board of SLM", BVMBV 1939:105. (In Ethiopia, SLM had in certain ways become dependent on ordained SEM missionary pastors, a problem which they didn't want to see

repeated in Kenya; cf. BVMBV 1926:124 ff and p. 93, below)

19 Originally, the Board planned to send him out early in July 1939 – without his family but together with a "co-worker", i.e. Enok Salomonsson. Mrs. Stark was expected to come later with the children; BVMT 1939:69 f, 142, 179.

20 BVMT 1940:36 ff

21 BVMBV 1939:104 f

22 Between 1945 and 1952 SLM sent 26 missionaries to Africa; among them only five came to Kenya, and two of these first after having spent a couple of years in Ethiopia;

cf. *Guds ord och löfte*, p. 122, Svensson, BV 1911–1961, p. 163, 177 ff

23 BVMT 1945:118 f. The story of their journey is told with many interesting details in BVJ 1946:87–121, "Över världshaven i krigstid".

24 BVMBV 1946:48. The elder daughter, Hanna-Karin Stark-Hechamo, has later worked as an SLM missionary in ELCK (ELCK 1963–1988, p. 53); the younger daughter, Eva Henriksson, is the mother of the present SLM Board Chairman, Per Henriksson.

transferred to Kenya.

According to the plans of the Mission Board in 1943, a third missionary family, Mr. and Mrs. Hjort, were to go to Kenya, but they, too, were sent to Ethiopia in 1946.<sup>26</sup>

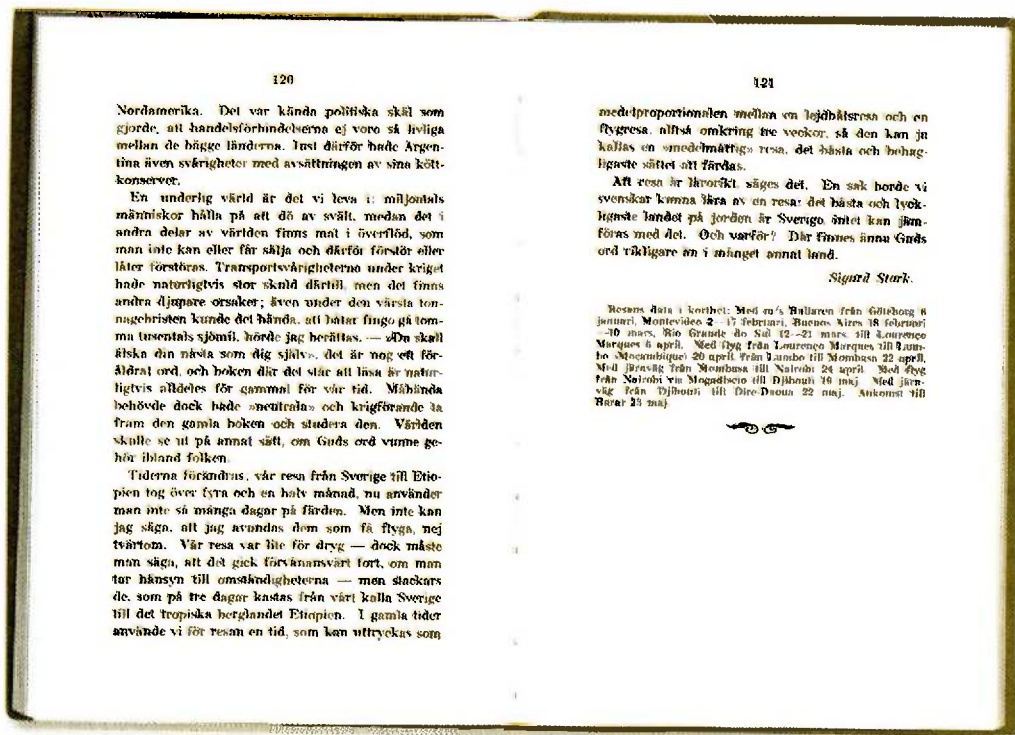
**AFTER THE END OF THE WAR.** God started to open the doors for mission work in Ethiopia, even among the Galla/Oromo. At the special request of Emperor Haile Selassie, SLM started to work in the province called Aroussi/Arsi.<sup>27</sup>

But what about Kenya? By 1947, no one in Sweden knew if it would still be possible to open up work at Iterio, or if the opportunity had been lost and the plot handed over to someone else.<sup>28</sup> The

Mission Board believed that SLM could still claim the plot at Iterio which had been given to them in 1939 – but was the title deed still valid,<sup>29</sup> and would the local population still welcome them? No one, except God, knew what the outcome would be.

However, the Mission Board decided to send one Swedish couple to Kenya, hoping and praying for the best.<sup>30</sup> This decision happens to be one of the most important ones ever taken by the SLM Board concerning the work in Kenya.

Furthermore, the fact that these missionaries arrived in Kenya exactly at the time when India was about to receive its independence was also to have a lot of unforeseen consequences. That will be evident in the next chapter.



The journey of Rev. and Mrs. Stark was dramatic and took more than 4 months. They started on Jan. 6 and arrived in Harar, Ethiopia, on May 23.

<sup>25</sup> BVMT 1939:141 ff, 1945:131

<sup>26</sup> According to BVMBV 1943:47, Martin Hjort was assigned to work in Kenya. Instead he was sent to Ethiopia with his family (Svensson, BV 1911-1961, p. 180). All of his four children have since served as SLM missionaries in Ethiopia for longer or shorter periods. His eldest son, Per-Martin Hjort, has also served as a missionary in Kenya together with his wife Gunnel. Another son, Bengt Hjort, has recently been the Chairman of the SLM Board.

<sup>27</sup> BVMT 1945:130; Svensson connects the

“doors” which have been “opened” with the ministry to the Oromo (Galla) people, especially referring to the work done by Mrs. Anna-Lena Röstin

<sup>28</sup> Anton Jönsson, the SLM field secretary, wrote a letter from Kisii town (dated May 27, 1948) which was published in BVMT 1948:98 ff. In it he listed a number of mistakes and failures made by SLM and by himself. He also stressed that it was only by the grace of God that the work could start in 1948.

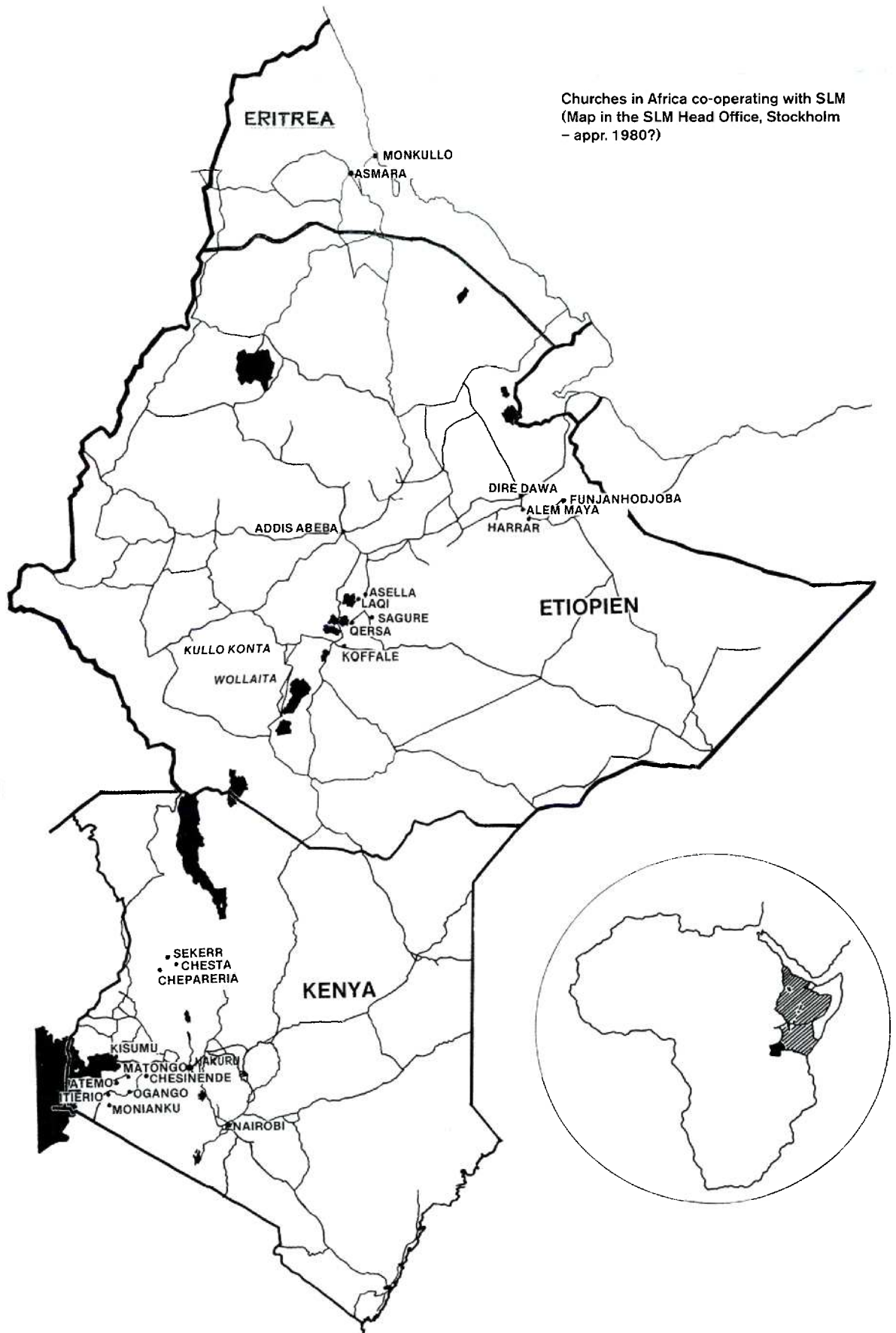
<sup>29</sup> In 1946 British authorities confirmed that

the plot at Iterio still belonged to SLM (BVMT 1948:99)

<sup>30</sup> One reason for sending missionaries to Kenya was that the mission friends were looking forward to the start of this work – another one that offerings had been given, destined for the new field! It would be difficult to refund that money... (BVMT 1948:99)



Churches in Africa co-operating with SLM  
(Map in the SLM Head Office, Stockholm  
- appr. 1980?)





The Airplane Ansgar (carrying the name of the most famous missionary to Scandinavia) brought a number of missionaries to Africa after World War II

*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.*

PSALM 118:1 [NIV. BIBLE REFERENCE QUOTED BY MARTIN LUNDSTRÖM IN  
HIS DIARY IN JAN. 1948, WHEN LEAVING ETHIOPIA FOR KENYA<sup>1</sup>

## 9. The pioneer period, 1948–1957

### The waiting at Wanjare

At Itierio, people were waiting to see what would happen. They hadn't had any contacts with Swedish Lutheran Mission since 1939. Would these *Wazungu* ("white people", Swa.) turn up, or not? Now, when World War II was over, why didn't the Swedish missionaries come? Had the plans been changed, or had they given up?

In January 1948 a *baraza* ("assembly") was held in Wanjare location,<sup>2</sup> where the local community made the following decision: The Swedish mission is to be given one more year. If the missionaries have not arrived by February 1949, 10 years after the original agreement, the plot will be handed over to someone else who can develop it. – Others

had also expressed an interest in the plot, e.g. the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>3</sup>

But the Wanjare people didn't have to wait. It only took one more week, and then the rumour started to be spread: Two Swedish missionaries have come to Kisii town.

Who were the missionaries turning up?

There were at least five realistic alternatives:

- It could be Mr. Anton Jönsson and his family, the experienced missionary who was a personal friend of the Ethiopian Emperor, and who even had spent three years in Kenya, working with Ethiopian refugees

- It could be another experienced Ethiopian missionary, Rev. Sigurd Stark, together with his family. Up to his death in 1976 he was a central figure in the SLM mission work. In 1939 he studied medicine and Swahili, and in the same year he was ordained as a pastor in the Church of Sweden; all this was made as a preparation for service in Kenya

<sup>1</sup> In one of his books, Martin Lundström refers to his diary of 1948; *Afrikaminnen*, p. 72 ff

<sup>2</sup> *Wanjare* is the old, colonial name; today the name *Bonchari* is used

<sup>3</sup> *BVMT* 1948:100

• It could also be the mild and intellectual Enok Salomonsson and his family; as early as in 1939, it was planned that Salomonsson were to go to Kenya with Sigurd Stark

• It could be the Hjort family; Martin Hjort was recruited in the early 1940's for service in Kenya

• It could also be someone very young and new, who just recently had been recruited for the work in Kenya

The correct answer is: it was the last alternative.

THE SLM BOARD had decided to send Mr. and Mrs. Lundström, a young and recently married couple to Kenya.<sup>4</sup> They came to Ethiopia in late 1947, where they stayed for some weeks. They continued to Kenya in January 1948, where they were to stay for 16 years.

After half a year, another missionary couple, Enok and Magda Salomonsson, joined them in Kenya: They served in Ethiopia 1946–48 and in Kenya 1948–52, after which they returned to Sweden. A fifth missionary, Miss Anna-Brita Albertson, joined them in 1950; except for one year's service in Ethiopia and some visits to Sweden, she lived in Kenya until she died, 83 years old, in 2005.

The decision to send these five missionaries to Kenya, and in this order, has influenced the history of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya up to today. Many of the traits characterizing the Church even today have some roots going back to their ministry. God used them when the foundation of what we today call ELCK was laid. Their good contributions are easily seen today in ELCK, but also some of the weaknesses of the Church can be

traced back to the very first beginning.

But let us remember this: *It is important to learn from history – not to be bound by it.* That means: Even when recognizing previous mistakes, we shouldn't treat them as something which has to bind us today. Instead we should learn from history – recognize what is good and what is bad – and act according to what we are convinced to be right, just and the will of God. Then we will reap the *blessings* from history without being *bound* by it.

Let us now return to Tavelstö in Sweden. The year is 1947.

### The first missionaries are sent out to Kenya

In 1947, Sept. 14, a dedication service for missionaries took place in Tavelstö church in northern Sweden.<sup>5</sup>

The blessing service was held for Martin and Gunborg Lundström, who became the pioneer missionaries of Swedish Lutheran Mission in Kenya. A few weeks later they flew from Sweden to Ethiopia with the famous "Ansgar" airplane,<sup>6</sup> a journey which took three days.<sup>7</sup> They stayed in Ethiopia for a while before going to Kenya in Jan. 1948. – Travelling on the plane with them was also Axel B. Svensson, who made his third trip to Ethiopia. After a few months there he returned to Sweden while the Lundströms continued to Kenya.

The decision to send first the Lundström couple to Kenya and then the Salomonsson family, and not vice versa, is one of the most important decisions taken by the Mission Board of Swedish Lutheran Mission.

4 It seems that the decision to send the Lundströms to Kenya as pioneer missionaries was made quite rapidly by the SLM Board; cf. BVMBV 1945:55 f, 1946:60

5 When my wife Katrina and I visited the Umeå area in 2006, we travelled to Tavelstö in order to see the Church where the Lundström couple were blessed before being sent to Kenya. I wanted to take a picture of the church – but found that it had been demolished and a new one built in its place, something which today is very rare in Sweden. According to oral information from Mr. Nils-Ola Andersson (Lillsjöberg, Umeå, Sweden), Rev. and Mrs. Lundström

are buried in the Church cemetery at Tavelstö.

6 Svensson, BV 1911–1961, p. 179 f, Lundström, *Afrikaminnen*, p. 67 ff. – After WW II, a DC 3 aeroplane was used to take Swedish missionaries to different countries when mission work could start up again. The aeroplane was named "Ansgar" after the missionary who brought the gospel to Scandinavia.

7 For a contemporary and official overview of the development, see BVMT and BVM BV from 1947 onwards; cf. Svensson, BV 1911–1961, p. 180 ff, and Lundström, *Afrikaminnen*, p. 67 ff. Interesting and more

unofficial sources are the letters to the SLM Board. As customary among many SLM missionaries by this time, they were often addressed personally to Svensson (*Käre Farbror Axel*, "Dear Uncle Axel"). Many of them are found in the SLM Archives (MBVA; RA), and many were later published in BVMT (e. g. 1948:37); Svensson was one of the editors of that paper for more than fifty years (1912–67). – As Lars Hjort has observed (*Mission under occupation*, p. 12, 24 f), the distinction between letters to SLM and to Svensson was often quite negligible!





A photo taken in Ethiopia 1947, just before Gunborg and Martin Lundström travelled to Kenya, from l. to r.: Gebre Hawariat, Elsa Olofsson (Bengtsson), Edith Hansen, Gunborg & Martin Lundström, Axel B. Svensson, Edith & Anton Jönsson

### Martin Lundström, 1922–1988

*Married 1947 to Gunborg, b. 1917, d. 2004.*

*They had five children: Gunnar, b. 1948, Britta, b. 1950,*

*Karin, 1952–53, Elisabeth, b. 1954, Eric, b. 1956.<sup>8</sup>*

*Their daughter Karin died some six months after her birth.*

**LUNDSTRÖM WAS BORN** in 1922 in a rural village in northern Sweden. He died in 1988, when preparing himself for a journey to Kenya to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ELCK.

In an obituary over Rev. Martin Lundström, Professor Oloph Bexell gave him one of the most distinguished titles found in Christendom, *plantator ecclesiae* – “Church planter”.<sup>9</sup>

And that is true – Lundström was one of the few Christians, and one of very few Lutherans, who in their lifetime could see their pioneer ministry grow not only into a parish, or a congregation, but into a full Church body. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there are not many Christians who can be given that title!

A few years after the arrival of the Lundström family to Itierio, the first baptisms took place. When Lundström died, 40 years after starting his ministry in Kenya, the number of Christians within that Church,

where he had been a leader for many years, were 30.000–40.000. Few people have the privilege to experience something like that in their lifetime.

He had some personal gifts which really assisted him in his work. It was very easy for him to establish contacts with people – he had many important visions which have influenced the development of ELCK – he was rather emotional, being able to express many of his feelings – he had a gift of being able to learn at least the basic elements in several languages easily, moreover the courage to use them quickly.

In many ways he was a very gifted person, and he made an impression on ELCK which is felt even today. Many missionaries have heard, when coming to a new place: “Here Martin Lundström was preaching in ...”, and then they mention the year he was there.<sup>10</sup> In many places where he was preaching a long time ago, there are now flourishing congregations.

WHEN THAT HAS been said, it is necessary to recognize the complexity of his personality.<sup>11</sup>

Lundström had a *pioneering spirit*, and an evangelistic zeal which gave the mission work and the young LCK Church a tradition of expansion which has been felt up to today. He was successful in opening up new places for mission work. Since his time, a number of them have expanded into big congregations and parishes. Consequently, it is not surprising that many ELCK Christians and many of the key persons have a living memory of him, although he left Kenya 44 years ago!<sup>12</sup> But some other traits in his character were rather strange. They are easily seen in his correspondence,<sup>13</sup> and sometimes even in the minutes.<sup>14</sup>

He did not succeed in any higher studies after the basic Primary school (*folkskolan*, Swe.). This fact seems to have created some kind of inferiority problems for him in relation to the other missionaries. When he was sent to Africa in 1947, he had no qualified training except for a short missionary course in London.<sup>15</sup> Almost all the other missionaries sent to Kenya from Sweden had undertaken higher studies, or, had acquired a professional training at college or university level (including his own wife, who was a trained nurse).

Perhaps his personality explains why he, despite his personal capacity, never managed to acquire any formal education, not even graduate from the Swedish *gymnasium*,<sup>16</sup> roughly equivalent to leaving *Secondary school* with K.C.S.E. When he and his wife were sent out to Kenya, the Board was very vague about his studies and general experience.<sup>17</sup>

The Mission Board therefore took a risk when sending him and his wife to Kenya. For many years he looked very successful in his ministry, perhaps especially in opening up work in new places, but gradually a tension was built up in the Church, which in the end forced him and his family, among others, to leave Kenya after a major crisis.<sup>18</sup>

When Martin Lundström is compared with the other missionaries working at the same time, and together with him, he also seems to have been rather restless.<sup>19</sup> Other missionaries could stay for a long time, being committed to one place. He had a totally different disposition: He came as a pioneer missionary to Itierio. After a furlough in Sweden, instead of returning to Itierio, he began to build up a second station, Matongo, starting from scratch.

He also built the Church there and started Matongo Bible School. After a second furlough in Sweden the family did not return to Matongo; instead they moved to Nairobi where he bought the house at Ngong' Road.<sup>20</sup> Moreover he bought a church building and a plot at Uhuru Highway (at a bargain price and in just a matter of days), established contacts with Elam Musinde in the Maragoli area, etc.

AMONG THE MOST important contributions from the side of Martin Lundström are his visions; some of them have been very influential for the development of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya:

- he started up the theological training (Matongo Bible School, nowadays Matongo Lutheran Theological College) – something which he did without any support from the SLM Board

- he began the urban ministry in Nairobi, also trying to reach Kisumu and Mombasa<sup>21</sup>

- he also wanted to reach new tribal groups (perhaps especially Luo, Luhya).

WHEN THAT HAS been said, it must also be noted that the two books, where he describes *how* this work was performed, give a confusing and sometimes even naive impression.<sup>22</sup> He started many *projects* but he often lacked the strength to fulfil them, or, had to give them up because of conflicts with others. He was, with a modern term, project oriented and rather impulsive.

He also had a gift of establishing *contacts* with new people; that is also documented in his books. But it seems he didn't notice that he was easily deceived, even by crooks.<sup>23</sup> He also got involved in many *conflicts*, especially with his missionary colleagues.

No single individual – whether missionary nor Kenyan – has had such an influence on the development of ELCK as Martin Lundström.<sup>24</sup> Although it is more than 40 years since he and his family had to leave Kenya after a major conflict, and he has been dead for almost 20 years, his legacy can still, even today, be seen in many areas of the Church.

One of the best descriptions of him which I have heard was recently given by Bishop Thomas Asiago Nyagato:

A visionary leader, with strength and weaknesses.<sup>25</sup>

Footnotes on next page

- 8 Hylander, *Biografisk matrikel över Svenska Kyrkans Prästerskap* 1970, p. 533 (where the daughter Karin not is mentioned); an obituary over Rev. Lundström is found in *BVMBV* 1988:61 f, and over Mrs. Lundström in *BVMBV* 2004:84 f
- 9 In Church of Sweden, it has up to now been a longstanding tradition that all pastors after their death are given an obituary (*minnesteckning*, Swe.) by one of their fellow-pastors. As Rev. Lundström had been ordained by Bp. Elis Malmeström in Växjö, Dr. Bexell presented his obituary in that diocese, although Lundström while in Sweden served almost exclusively in Luleå diocese. Oloph Bexell. *Präster i S:t Sigfrids stift*, p. 286 ff. – Bexell's biography is strong on details about Lundström's ministry in Sweden, but more vague concerning his ministry in Kenya.
- 10 In the early 1990's, when preaching in a congregation near Nyamira town, I was told that Lundström had tried to acquire land there 1951–52 for a new station. The chief, a Roman Catholic, went against it – something which the local population by that time had regretted for 40 years! Cf *BVMBV* 1951:38.
- 11 Here it can be said that I have met all ELCK Kenyan pastors who were ordained up to 1996 and almost everyone ordained up to today, most of the evangelists trained up to 1996, all missionaries (except two) working within LCK up to 1971 and most of them working within ELCK up to 1996. I have living memories from a large number of the persons who appear in this study. Martin Lundström happens to be one of the few key persons of ELCK whom I have never met. I have, however, spent many hours reading his letters, articles and books, and I can't tell how many conversations I have had in Kenya since 1990 with people – ELCK leaders, Christians, pastors, missionaries – giving their impression of Rev. Lundström: His ministry, his personality, his influence and his peculiarities. I also had the privilege of interviewing Mrs. Gunborg Lundström in January 1995.
- 12 In his book *En öppen dörr i Kenya* (p. 63, 65), Lundström mentions some of the places he visited: Bobembe, Ogango, Tabaka, Nyandochi, Kiaremu, Gesuri, Nyamwetureko, Timaru, Nyagesa, Kiabiraa, Nyamira, Eronge, Ramba, Kiambere, Nyamatoki, Kiomonyo; in the Kenyoro area: Nyagokiani, Matorora, Nyasio, Ng'oina, Nyairanga, Ekerenyo, Nyanaro, Nyamao. – It is typical that some of the names are misspelt; in general he was often careless when writing, even official letters. His statement that the Lutheran Church had succeeded in establishing congregations at all places where the work had begun (p. 63), needs to be confirmed.
- 13 His letters to the Mission Director of SLM, Rev. Sigurd Stark, are often very abusive, whether written in Swedish or in English, in one case even in Swahili. (It can be noted that Stark never lived in Kenya, only studied Swahili in the late 1930's.) A great number of letters are found in the ELCK Archives at Itierio, and a vast collection in the SLM Archives in Stockholm.
- 14 In the minutes of one of the first Ex. Comm. meetings (Febr. 27, 1960, J. M. Onsando being the secretary), it is written: "After the prayer, the President [Lundström], declared to the committee his intention to resign from his presidency [presidency]. He was not willing to give reasons for his resignation; he stated that he had always met opposition from his European brothers in almost every field... The President then burst into tears and moved from the chair and sat among the members... After many other speakers on this matter, Mrs. Gunborg Lundström [also being a committee member] managed to persuade and bring Mr. Martin into the committee." Min. of Ex. Comm., 27.2.1960 (A 6:1; MBVA, RA).
- 15 In 1947, Lundström attended a missionary course at *Livingstone college* in London, like Jönsson and Stark had done before him. When writing to the mission friends in Sweden about his studies, Lundström described his experiences in post-war London in detail but was vague about the studies and their contents; *BVMT* 1947:87 ff. – In his book *Afrikaminnen* (p. 80), he gave the impression that he had undertaken advanced studies in London. He studied Swahili there, but he lacked the formal qualifications for studies on a university level.
- 16 Lundström was gifted in many ways, so it is surprising that he had no academic or professional qualification at the age of 25. The best explanation I have heard is that he had problems in subordinating himself to his teachers. One place where he studied, but failed, was *Fjellstedtska skolan* in Uppsala, which specialized in teaching students with such a rural background as his.
- 17 When this is recognized, the question can be put: Why was the SLM Board, including the Chairman Axel B. Svensson, so vague about the studies and qualifications of Lundström? That they were can be deduced from the general silence about his studies. In *BVMBV* 1946:60 he is just called "student", without any school or college being mentioned. (They are, however, mentioned after his death, *BVMBV* 1988:61.)
- 18 Having such a background as Lundström could, of course, easily create problems, especially if you consider that the other pioneer missionary, Enok Salomonsson, was a highly trained teacher with a university degree from Sweden. These two men were supposed to build up a number of mission schools together! For a short period these two families, with children, even shared *the same house* at Itierio (*BVMT*, 1949:23).
- 19 Few Kenyans have worked so close to Lundström as Rev. Otete. He describes him as rapid in his work, but also as following his own thoughts and visions: "Mwepesi katika kazi – aliendelea mbele tu – mtu mwenye bidii – hakuwa na woga – aliendelea peke yake." (*Interview* with Rev. James Otete Nchogu, Itierio, Jan. 2007.)
- 20 Today the *Oasis villas*, an income generating project of ELCK, are located there
- 21 The LCK work in Kisumu started appr. 1970, while correspondence by Lundström (file E II:4; *ELCKA*, Itierio) reveals that he on behalf of SLM tried to acquire a plot in the "African location" in Kisumu – in 1958!
- 22 Three examples taken from Lundström's books: *Afrikaminnen*, p. 71, the text on picture page following p. 80 (not numbered) and *En öppen dörr i Afrika*, p. 71 (the text under the picture). The first two examples show that Lundström was notoriously careless with details: "Two weeks" were in fact 6 days (*BVMT* 1947:179); Lundström didn't even spell the name of one of his closest co-workers correctly (*Festus Asuga*). The third shows his belief that handing out money could create friendship. These two elements, being careless with details and using money to create "friendship", are problems which have followed ELCK for many years.
- 23 It seems that he trusted quite many people without understanding that they could be more attracted by money, or by the possibility of acquiring a job through him, than by the Gospel.
- 24 A strange occurrence which regularly appears in Kisii-land is that people tend to confuse the two Martins – *Luther* and *Lundström*. When I was living in Matongo, 1991–96, it happened every year that I talked with people who were convinced that they had met *Martin Luther*, some even maintained that they were baptized by him...
- 25 *Interview* with Bp. Thomas Asiago Nyagato, Itierio, Jan. 2007



In January 1948 the Lundström couple travelled from Ethiopia to Kenya. When flying from Addis Abeba to Nairobi, Martin Lundström was aware that he was flying over the Galla area. He even commented on the fact that the Galla ministry was bearing fruits! He mentioned especially “the remarkable African missionary Buru” (who had been taught by *Mose Anton*) and his ministry among the Galla (Oromo), but also the work of Norwegian Lutheran Mission in that area.<sup>26</sup>

There are many questions which never will get any answer on this side of eternity. One is this: What had happened, if someone else, and not Martin Lundström, had been the SLM pioneer missionary in Kenya?<sup>27</sup>

It is relevant to raise that question, because according to the plans of the Board of Swedish Lutheran Mission, the Lundström couple were to wait in Nairobi. They were to prepare themselves for going to Itierio, until Mr. Jönsson – the field secretary, living in Ethiopia – could join them. But the plans could not be followed, and instead of waiting, Martin Lundström took a personal initiative.

**WHEN THE LUNDSTRÖM** couple arrived in Nairobi on Jan 14<sup>th</sup>, 1948, the hotels in Nairobi were occupied by British people who had left India in connection with its independence. Because of accommodation problems, the young missionaries gave up after a few days and decided to travel on their own to Kisumu.<sup>28</sup>

Here we find a small decision with great consequences: This meant that Lundström did not come to Itierio accompanied by the field secretary, who had been there 9 years before, but he and his wife came on their own. In fact they came several months



The first missionary house at Itierio. The Lundström family lived in that house from June 1948. When the Salomonsson family moved to Itierio, they shared the house with them!

ahead of both Anton Jönsson and the Salomonsson family.

The important question is: Did this just *happen*, or is this one of the first cases where Martin Lundström was bending the decisions, in this case made by the SLM Board, to his own favour?<sup>29</sup>

In the end of January, Mr. and Mrs. Lundström travelled from Nairobi to Kisumu by night train, arriving in Kisumu in the morning, Saturday 24, 1948.<sup>30</sup>

The following Monday, Jan. 26<sup>th</sup>, they started their journey to Kisii town, travelling in an old lorry which had been rebuilt into a kind of bus. It was filled with passengers. After a long and tough journey they came to Kisii town, a place where they would stay for many months, waiting for the arrival of the field secretary.

When arriving there, they were wondering whe-

26 Lundström, *Afrikaminnen*, p. 72 ff

27 Another, equally relevant, question is this: What had happened if the Salomonsson family had returned to Kenya in 1953? Then Martin Lundström would not have been the undisputed leader of the SLM work in Kenya.

28 Interview with Mrs. Lundström, Jan. 1995; cf. the description of the events given by Martin Lundström (1948) in *BVMT*, 1948:34 ff and (1978) in: *Afrikaminnen*, p. 75 ff. The statement made (1982) in his

later book, *En öppen dörr i Kenya* (p. 14), that they arrived in Nairobi on Jan. 20, 1948, is not correct.

29 The description of events given by Martin Lundström is interesting (*Afrikaminnen*, p. 75 f), but one of the statements is not very plausible: “In Nairobi we had planned to stay at least one month for language studies, or up to the time when ‘Mose-Anton’ [Jönsson] would come down to us and introduce us to the new work.” It is not very likely that the SLM Board had sent

the Lundström couple, young and inexperienced, to Kenya with such vague directives. It is more likely that they were told to stay in Nairobi until Jönsson came – and for one reason or another, they didn’t do that.

30 His description of the journey is a bit dramatic: The distance Nairobi – Kisumu is hardly 500 kilometres, and did the train pass rain forests [*urskogar*, Swe.]? (Lundström, *Afrikaminnen*, p. 76.)



The field secretary, Anton Jönsson, visiting Itierio and the Lundström and Salomonsson families, 1951

ther the plot at Itierio still remained the property of SLM or had been handed over to someone else.<sup>31</sup> In the latter case they were to move on to Eritrea.<sup>32</sup> Little did they know, that one week before their arrival, the Wanjare people in their *baraza* had given Swedish Lutheran Mission a respite of one more year, as we have noted above.

In May 1948 Jönsson came to Kenya, and went to Itierio together with Lundström.<sup>33</sup> Several matters were solved in a new *baraza*. They found, to their surprise, that the plot over the years had expanded from 3–4 acres to 10! (Some 9 people had added their plots to the mission premises.) Jönsson promised that a school would start presently, but stated on the other hand that SLM would not be able to build a hospital, instead the mission would build a clinic.<sup>34</sup>

The Lundström couple stayed in Kisii town up

to the middle of June, when they moved to Itierio. By that time they had succeeded in erecting the first buildings, but the housing situation was primitive for several years. For some time they even had to share a small house with the Salomonsson family.<sup>35</sup>

#### July 25, 1948 – the work starts

If any special date should be given as the very day when the Lutheran mission work in South Western Kenya started,<sup>36</sup> it would be the last Sunday in July, 1948. In one sense 25 July, 1948, can be said to be the *birthday of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya*.

On that very day Lundström preached in Swahili at the Suneka market place, translated into Ekegusii by one of his close co-workers, Klement (Clement) Nyandara.<sup>37</sup> The sermon was based on

<sup>31</sup> In 1946 the British authorities had confirmed that the plot still belonged to SLM; BVMT 1948:99

<sup>32</sup> Information given by Mrs. Lundström (*Interview*, Jan. 1995)

<sup>33</sup> According to Lundström (*Afrikaminnen*, p. 78), he and his wife had to wait in Kisii town *five* months for the arrival of Jönsson. The fact is: They came to Kisii on Jan. 26<sup>th</sup>,

while Jönsson attended a *baraza* at Itierio on May 22<sup>nd</sup> together with them (BVMT 1948:98 ff); that amounts to less than four months.

<sup>34</sup> BVMT 1948:101. – As a missionary in Kenya in the 1990's, I could personally confirm that promises of that kind (made by SLM in 1939), are almost never forgotten...

<sup>35</sup> Cf. BVMT 1949:23. According to Lundström, *Afrikaminnen*, p. 80, they moved up to Itierio early in June.

<sup>36</sup> As we have seen above, chapter 5, other Lutheran mission societies (from Germany and Sweden) had previously undertaken mission work in Kenya

the text in Rev. 3:20, about Jesus standing at the door, knocking.

As they didn't have any songbook in *Ekegusii* or Swahili, the Lundström couple sang a song in Swahili which Martin himself had translated. They also sang a well-known Swedish hymn in Swedish, "Jesus för världen givit sitt liv".<sup>37</sup>

As it seems, this was the very first public meeting which Martin Lundström arranged at Suneka, just a few hundred meters away from the mission compound at Itierio. For a long time he went there every Sunday, preaching to the people at the market. (The SDA Church had, by purpose, tried to make Sundays to be market day in the Kisii tribe.<sup>38</sup>)

In August 1948 *Enok and Magda Salomonsson* came to Kisii with their two sons. As we have seen, they had already in 1940 been blessed for mission service in Kenya. They had also been working in Ethiopia since 1946 as a preparation for going to Kenya. They stayed in Kisii town a few weeks before moving up to Itierio – moving into the same small and very primitive house as the Lundström family. Almost immediately Enok Salomonsson joined Lundström in preaching at Suneka market.<sup>40</sup> – Humanly speaking, it could have been expected that the Salomonsson couple were to be the first SLM missionaries in Kenya, but for different reasons, as we have seen, the Lundström family were already established in the Kisii area when they came.

Only a few days after having moved from Kisii town to Itierio, the Salomonsson family lost their eldest son, Jarl. He died in malaria on Sept. 29,

1948, after having been sick for three days. Of course, it was a great shock to the family, which now remained with only one child. – A few years later, in 1953, the Lundström family lost an infant daughter, Karin, in the same way. In both cases the children were only sick for three days.<sup>41</sup>

Within the next years several new missionaries joined the work.

*Anna-Brita Albertson*, a trained nurse and midwife, came to Kenya in 1950 and was active as a missionary for almost 45 years (with only a few journeys home to Sweden, and one year of medical work in Ethiopia in the 1950's). After her retirement in 1995, she moved to a house which she herself supervised in being built close to Itierio, where she lived up to her death in July 2005.<sup>42</sup> – In the early 1960's she left her medical responsibilities at Itierio and became involved in literary work, especially in *Ekegusii*. (We will return to that later.)

*Rev. K. G. Ohlsson* and *Kerstin Eriksson* (later *Andersson*) both came in 1954, while *Valborg Peterson* (*Löfgren*) and *Irene Rinkelo* (*Ohlsson*) came in 1956.<sup>43</sup> These missionaries were active in starting up the mission work in different areas together with a number of African co-workers.

The wedding between K. G. and Irene Ohlsson, on Dec. 22, 1956, was the first Lutheran wedding in Nyanza,<sup>44</sup> while the first Lutheran wedding among the Kenyans seems to have been between James Otete and his wife Milka, 24 Sept., 1958 (shortly before his ordination).<sup>45</sup>

37 It can be noted that Klement Nyandara, who worked close to Lundström for many years, never left his original confession, the Seventh Day Adventist Church. On Sundays he translated the Sermons for Lundström, but on Saturdays he went to an SDA congregation. (*Interview* with Ev. Aristarko Ongoro Gwaro, Itierio, Jan. 2007; *Written statement* by Bp. Francis Nyamwaro Onderi, *How it all began*, ELCK History Seminar, March 2007; oral information given at MLTC in 2007.) – Nyandara died early in 2008.

38 *BVMT* 1948:130; Lundström, *Afrikaminnen*, p. 82 f. – It can be noted that this document, telling the story of the first preaching in Kisii-land, and one of the most

interesting texts in the history of ELCK, in fact was a private letter to the SLM Board Chairman.

39 *Interview* with Ev. Metusela Magoka, Itierio, Dec. 2006; *BVMT* 1948:126 f

40 *BVMT* 1948:140

41 *BVMT* 1948:141, 146 f, 1953:85 f; Lundström, *Afrikaminnen*, p. 94 f

42 In 2005 (May 5), Anna-Brita Albertson celebrated 55 years of life and work in Kenya. She died two months later, 83 years old. See *Till Liv*, July 2005, p. 19; an obituary over Anna-Brita is found in *BVMBV* 2005:84 f.

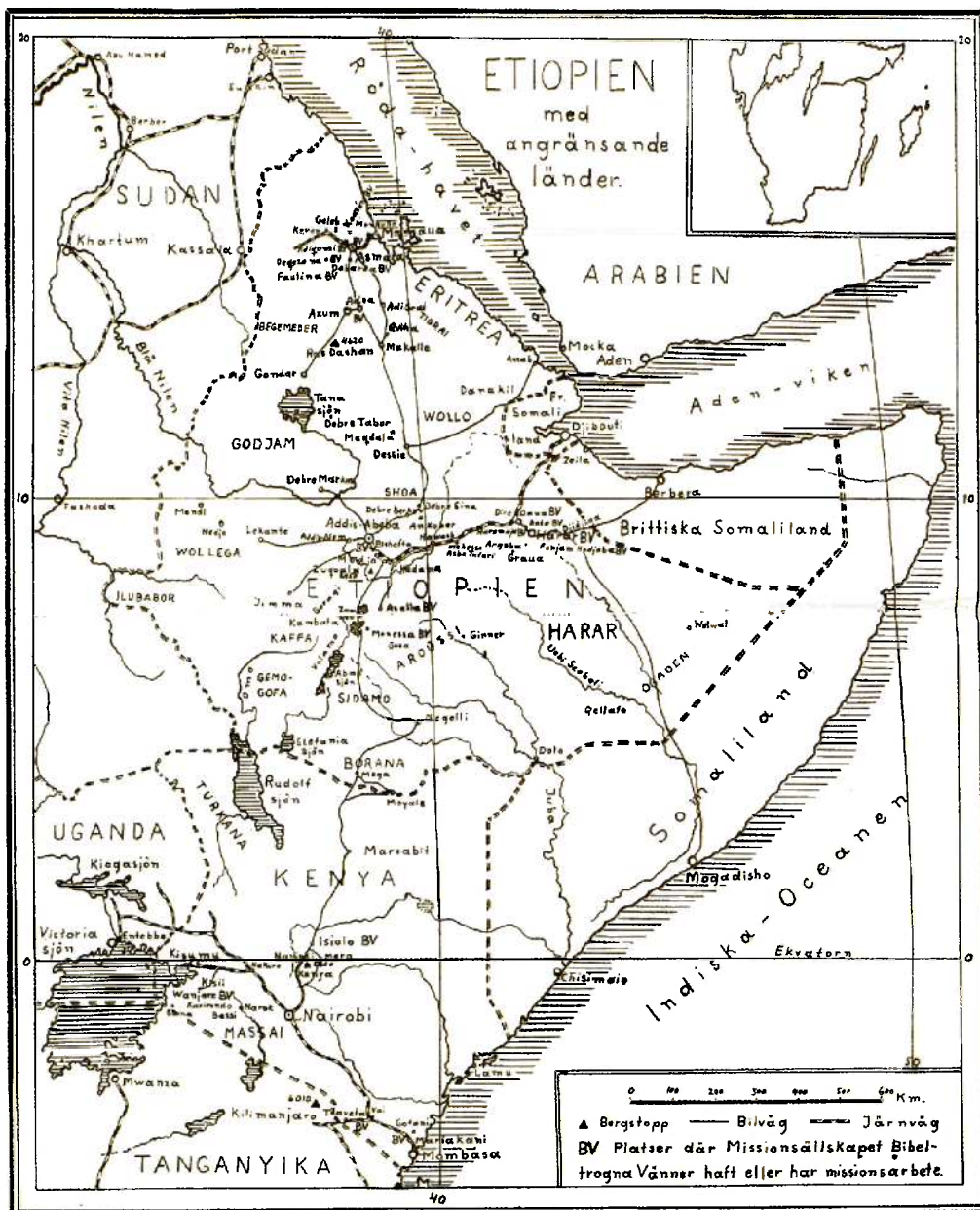
43 Irene Ohlsson has described her way from Karelia (formerly in Finland, now in Russia), via Finland and Sweden to Kenya in

a charming book. It is rather personal, but to a large extent it is based on her diary and for that reason an important historical document. Irene Ohlsson, *Från Karelen till Afrika*.

44 An interesting detail revealing one of the many paradigm shifts which have taken place in the Kenyan community, in this case concerning marriage traditions: On the morning of his own wedding day, K. G. Ohlsson assisted a Kisii woman with a metal saw, releasing her from a traditional Kisii "wedding ring" (*ebitingi*) which was fixed to one of her legs (Ohlsson, *Från Karelen till Afrika*, p. 40 ff; cf. Lundström, *Afrikaminnen*, p. 42).

45 Ohlsson, *Från Karelen till Afrika*, p. 73





Map of Kenya and Ethiopia, 1953. The sign "BV" indicates where SLM had been working by that time

### The initial mission work – a study in expansion

As was common by this time, the late 1940's, the mission work undertaken by Swedish Lutheran mission was like a stool with three legs:

- Medical work
- School work
- Evangelisation

Later on, the work of ELCK has been developed into more departments. Let us now study how the

SLM work started in Kisii-land – and also how it expanded!

#### a. Medical work

The first section really to function as intended was perhaps the *medical work*. Mrs. Lundström began the work quite immediately. In the beginning she used, in fact, her own very primitive house as a "clinic".<sup>46</sup> In 1950 a small clinic, since then rebuilt many times, was opened at Itierio. It was for many



The wedding of Irene and K.G. Ohlsson was the first Lutheran wedding in Nyanza



A model of Iiterio station, appr. 1957

years supervised by Anna-Brita Albertson, in the beginning assisted by Gunborg Lundström, both of them being trained nurses. – It also seems that the Iiterio clinic was the first medical institution in the whole district,<sup>47</sup> which, of course, created good will in the community.

Almost from the very start, the clinic got a very good reputation. Already in its second year, 1951, 12.304 patients were treated there – which means some 34 patients a day (or 47 patients on working days).<sup>48</sup> The reputation was so good, that for some years even people from the Asian community in Kisii town travelled to the mission clinic for treatment. In 1954 they received 13.549 visits by patients (among them 116 by Luos and 51 by Asians).<sup>49</sup>

But it was not only the medical treatment which was good in the Iiterio clinic by this time. It has also been said, that especially *Anna-Brita* (as she

commonly was called!) put a great stress on the devotions which were arranged every morning in the dispensary. For her, it was not only the medical treatment that was important – equal stress, at least, was put on the spiritual aspect of the mission

Anna-Brita Albertson with her assistant Benson



46 *Written statement* by Bp. Onderi, *How it all began*, ELCK History Seminar, March 2007

47 In April 1950, the work of erecting the first Iiterio clinic started (BVMT 1950:91). The following month, in May, Anna-Brita Albertson came to Iiterio (BVMT 1950:99

ff). The clinic was inaugurated in October (BVMT 1951:7 f). As it seems, Albertson was one of the first midwives to work among the *Abagusii*; BVMBV 1948:56 f; cf. *Written statement* by Bp. Onderi, *How it all began*, ELCK History Seminar, March 2007.

48 BVMBV 1951:45; that very year 157 expectant mothers were examined, but only 14 deliveries took place in the clinic!

49 Information taken from BVMBV 1954:55f; of 38 deliveries, 3 were twin deliveries!



work.<sup>50</sup> It is a tribute to her memory (and to her faith and work) that a number of girls and ladies in the Itierio area today are called *Anna-Birita*.

A second clinic started at Matongo in 1957. For many years Valborg Petersson (Löfgren), and later Brita Ekström, from 1961, were responsible for the medical work there.

#### *b. School work*

Also the school work was very successful in the beginning. It can, however, be noted that the Mission Board initially gave the responsibility of the school work to two persons with a totally different background: Enok Salomonsson was a trained teacher with a university degree while Lundström had no formal training.<sup>51</sup>

After a few years Salomonsson left Kenya, in 1952, without returning, while Lundström gradually left the school work. Two new missionaries were assigned to supervise the school work, Rev. K.G. Ohlsson and Kerstin Eriksson (Andersson), both trained teachers who came to Kenya in 1954.

It seems that the schools, too, were very successful from the beginning. An old evangelist has said that

one reason why *Itierio* has such a good reputation in school matters, even today, is the fact that the school work started in such a good way.<sup>52</sup>

One reason for the success seems to have been that the Lutheran schools were open for everybody. The very fact that the school ministry was stressed from the very beginning seems to have been important in the long run. The school ministry undertaken by *ELCK* in general has led to a good reputation among school authorities in Kenya even today.<sup>53</sup>

The first school started at Itierio in 1949. In 1950 there were 144 students in 3 classes; by 1956, SLM was running 5 schools (three at Itierio!) with 17 classes and 521 students (95 of them girls). A special effort was made to reach girls; for that reason, some of the girls, but no boys, were exempted from paying school fees. One of the first schools was exclusively for girls, now called *Itierio Girls' Boarding school*. A few years later, the mission schools had 1349 students (among them 299 girls) and in 1962, SLM had responsibility for 17 schools (5 in Luo-land and 12 in Kisii-land) with 2,496 students (667 of them girls).<sup>54</sup>



Bojan Pettersson (Löwgren) when moving to Matongo, where she was the first nurse



The clinic at Matongo

<sup>50</sup> She was known as an excellent nurse, but patients received not less spiritual treatment than medical care from her. She loved the Word of God "very much" (*zaidi*, Swa.; *Interview* with Rev. James Otete

Nchogu, Itierio, Jan. 2007).

<sup>51</sup> *BVMBV* 1949:45 f

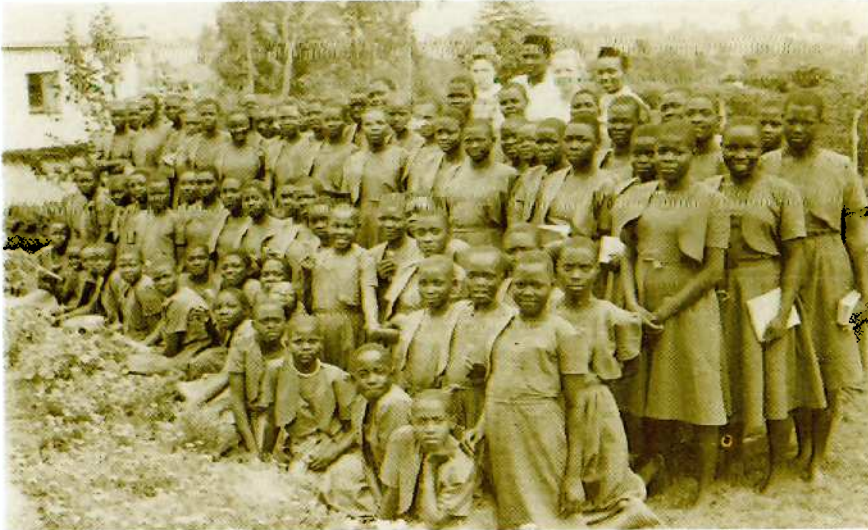
<sup>52</sup> *Interview* with Ev. Peter Nyangweso, Itierio, Dec. 2006.

<sup>53</sup> *Comment* by Bp. Thomas Asiago Nyaga-

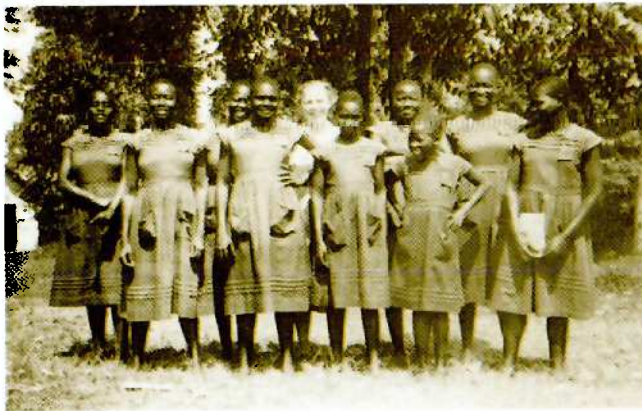
to, *ELCK History Seminar*, March 2007

<sup>54</sup> Statistics taken from *BVMBV* 1949:45 f, 1950:47, 1956:49, 1960:51, 1962:46





Students – and  
some teachers  
– at Itierio Girls'  
Boarding School



Kerstin Eriksson (Andersson), the first female missionary teacher at Itierio together with some of the first students



The primary school at Itierio

Assisting the missionaries in the early school ministry, during a number of years, was especially the teacher John Mamboleo.<sup>55</sup>

### *c. Evangelistic work*

Of special interest is, of course, the evangelistic ministry, and let us study it from some different aspects. It started to expand rapidly on several fronts.

It is not very well known, that the very first *Lutheran baptism* in Nyanza took place on May 26, 1950.<sup>56</sup> It was an emergency baptism when Tomas,

the infant son of Klement Nyandara, was baptized, but he died after two days, on the morning of Whit Sunday (Pentecost). It is, however, not clear who performed the baptism, whether it was Salomonsson or Lundström – both were, in fact, present at the baptism.<sup>57</sup>

The first *regular baptism* took place on Dec. 23, 1951, when 18 persons (17 men and one woman) were baptized by Enok Salomonsson, all of the men being students at Itierio.<sup>58</sup> Among those baptized were James Otete Nchogu (later the first national pastor and first national LCK President),

<sup>55</sup> BVMT 1956:48 f

<sup>56</sup> As we have seen, German Lutherans and SEM missionaries had previously been working in other areas of Kenya – so Lutheran baptisms had definitely taken place before 1950/51!

<sup>57</sup> One of the witnesses to the baptism was

Anna-Brita Albertsson, who had arrived in Kenya just a few weeks before; cf. the report in BVMT 1950:121. When she died in 2005, she had seen the number of Lutherans in Kenya grow from one baptized individual to a Church, i.e. ELCK, comprising some 80.000 members! – Bp Nyamwaro

commented on this baptism in his written contribution to the ELCK History Seminar, cf. note 37, above; otherwise very few ELCK Christians seem to be aware of this important event.



One of the first baptismal groups, baptized by Rev. K. G. Ohlsson

Francis Nyamwaro (later the first ELCK Bishop) and Aristarko Ongoro, later one of the first trained evangelists. – According to Bishop Onderi, only the *men* were baptized, while the woman (Selina Oseko) was confirmed; coming from another community (Maragoli), she had already been baptized there.<sup>59</sup>

The *number of Christians* increased rapidly. In 1954, 289 persons belonged to the congregations led by the SLM missionaries, in 1958 the members were 1200. In 1960 not less than 799 persons were baptized (453 adults, 346 children). By this time, there were only two or three pastors in congregational work (James Otete, K.G. Ohlsson, Martin Lundström).<sup>60</sup> They were assisted by a number of national workers, most of them untrained. – With such an expansion, there is reason to question how thorough the baptismal teaching could be.<sup>61</sup>

**THE EXPANSION** of the work is a bit surprising: The Swedish Lutheran missionaries were working in an area where Roman Catholics and the SDA Church had been active for some 40 years, but it only took a few years for the new mission to be known and accepted.

Initially a number of Roman Catholics tried to hinder the Lutheran mission. In Nov. 1951 a Church built by SLM, at Botoro, was even burnt down by some Catholics. Rumours were also spread widely that Lundström was drinking blood.<sup>62</sup> – It is well known that such accusations were made especially against Lundström. One reason can be that he, unknowingly, at an early stage had happened to break against a certain sensitive Kisii custom.<sup>63</sup>

It can also be noted that quite many of the first Lutheran Christians, both at Itierio and in other

58 The names of the 18 baptizands are given in a report which immediately was printed in Sweden (BVMT 1952:52); in a study paper by David Atura, *The Development of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (E.L.C.K.)*, 1948 – 1992, p. 5 f, the same names appear but some with a slightly different spelling: Serina Oseko and her husband Elinesti Oseko; Zakaria Makore; Zakaria Masese; Zedekia Ongeri; Ibrahimu Tinega; Aristariko Ongoro; Isaka Bwana; Isaka Mosera; Johnson Ongoro; Johnson Nyankieya; David Nyaga; Samison Oigo; Francis Nyamwaro; Samwel Nyamwaro; Petro Nyangweso; James Otete; Alois Kerongo. – It seems that two men with

the name Peter Nyangweso were living at Itierio by this time. When I interviewed the *Evangelist* P. N. in Dec. 2006, he stated that he was baptized by Martin Lundström (not Salomonsson) in Sept. 1953.

59 “Alipokelewa kwani alibatizwa kulekwao”; statement by Bp. Onderi, *How it all began*, ELCK History Seminar, March 2007

60 BVMBV 1954:53, 1958:44, 1960:49; we will return to the issue of *ordained* and *not ordained* male missionaries

61 The principles of the baptismal classes are given in Lundström, *Afrikaminnen*, p. 90 – but does he describe an *ideal* or the *fact*?

62 See Lundström, *Afrikaminnen*, p. 100 f, and Jaakko Lounela, “An old mission and

a young Church”, in: *Mission Studies* 12, Vol. VI-2, p. 69 f. – That such a rumour concerning Lundström had existed, I heard regularly in the 1990’s in Kisii-land.

63 According to Rev. John Momanyi Kururia (*oral comment* at the ELCK History Seminar, March 2007), Lundström at one time planted a certain tree (at Itierio?), without recognizing the implications in a Kisii cultural context. According to Kisii customs, *planting such a tree* was done when you had killed someone! – According to Kururia, that tree planting of Martin Lundström was the origin for the spreading of that rumour.



places, had an SDA background. One reason why Swedish Lutheran Mission was so successful in areas previously dominated by the SDA Church, can be that the Lutheran school ministry was more successful (not least in trying to reach the girls in a special way),<sup>64</sup> another one that the Lutheran baptismal practice was different.<sup>65</sup>

**THE REPORTS SENT** home to Sweden are full of interesting information about the expanding ministry. Just one example which is taken from the status in 1952:<sup>66</sup>

- Services were held at Itierio every Sunday at 11 a.m.; a youth meeting or prayer meeting took place every other Sunday evening

- The preachers were: Salomonsson, Klement Nyandara, Zakaria Makori, Francis Obiri, James Otete, Lundström

- Regularly 100–150 persons attended the services.

- Bible studies and catechismal classes were taught on Saturday evenings; after a while the catechismal class was divided into three groups

- In 1952, 33 persons had been baptized, while two other persons (one SDA member, one Roman Catholic) also had joined the congregation at Itierio which grew to 54 “souls”

**THE FIRST** new places outside of Itierio where regular work started, were Botoro and Bogitaa, and from

The work in the Mititi area has grown so much that sometimes it is necessary to have services and meetings outside of the Church building



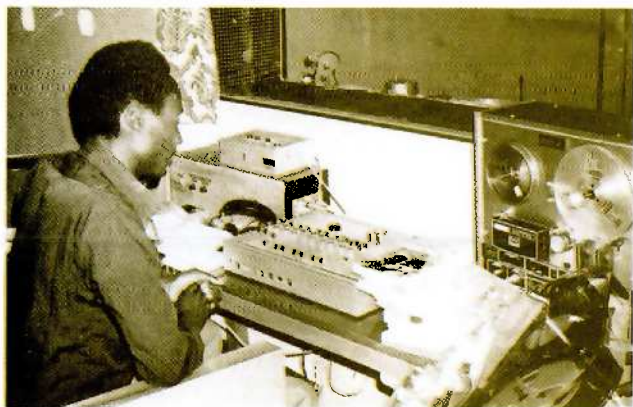
64 An interesting comment (by W. R. Ochieng'?) is that one reason why the SDA Church, which initially was so successful in the Kisii tribe, later lost much of its previous influence, was its anti-intellectual character. It didn't stress the school work, which other Churches have done (especial-

ly Roman Catholics and Lutherans?).  
65 According to Rev. Otete, the SDA Church had baptismal classes which lasted 2–3 years, the whole family should be baptized at the same time, and the candidates were requested to buy a Bible (New Testament?). Consequently many preferred to be bap-

tized as Lutherans. (*Interview* with Rev. James Otete Nchogu, Itierio, Jan. 2007.)

66 *BVMBV* 1952:36 f. – The school at Itierio had 174 students in 5 classes. Teachers were Salomonsson, Klement Nyndara, Joel Abuga, Andrew Bwoge, David Ongoro and Lundström; *BVMBV* 1952:37.





The radio ministry started in 1957; later on a studio was built at Itierio

very early on “prayer houses” were built there, even if one of them almost immediately was burnt down by arsonists.<sup>67</sup>

Within just a few years, the work expanded to the *Luo tribe*. A Luo student, Dickson Obwuor, who was studying at Itierio, wanted to be baptized. After consulting Anton Jönsson, who was Field Secretary for the entire work of SLM, including Kenya, the missionaries decided that he could be

baptized, although he didn’t come from the Kisii tribe. In this way the work spread to Mititi in 1957, and through Mititi to several other areas in Luo-land.<sup>68</sup> – It can be noted, that this expansion to the Luo area wasn’t the result of any plan or strategy, but came through the requests from the Luos themselves.

The work also spread to other areas of Kisii-land.

This was also the time when the radio ministry started. During 1957, 30 services were sent through the “West Kenya Station” on the air.<sup>69</sup>

*d. A new mission station is built at Matongo.*

*A small Bible School starts*

Lundström started to build up a new mission station at Matongo in 1953 when some other alternatives,<sup>70</sup> among them Magwagwa,<sup>71</sup> had been given up. Jeftha Michoro, later one of the first pastors in LCK, was among those requesting the mission to open work in N. Mugirango.<sup>72</sup> He was also very successful in crossing tribal borders, working in many Luo congregations.<sup>73</sup>

The Matongo area was almost desolate when Lundström started to build the mission station in 1953



67 The first “prayer house” (a church building!) at Botoro was almost immediately burnt down, but within a few months a new was erected; *BVMBV* 1951:38

68 Lundström, *Afrikaminnen*, p. 112 f. – According to Chief Lawrence Oliech, the name of the Luo student was Nelson Obwuor. Others among the first Lutheran Luo Christians were Meshak Waga and Deborah Ochola (interview with Chief Oliech at Matongo, March 2007).

69 *BVMBV* 1957:48

70 In *BVMBV* 1951:38 it is said that a plot had been given to SLM at a place in South Mugirango (Mariwa?) where a second station was to be built. In *BVMBV* 1952:35 f

some places are mentioned: Mariwa, West Nyokal and Tabaka. What happened with these plans is a bit unclear. In 1953 a new mission station was built up at Matongo; see *BVMBV* 1953:46, cf. Lounela, “An old mission and a young Church”, in: *Mission studies*, 12, p. 70.

71 When living at Matongo in the 1990’s, I received oral information that Magwagwa also had been discussed as a possible alternative for establishing a second mission station

72 A key person to bring SLM to Matongo was Jeftha Michoro; in a Swahili paper (*Historia ya maisha yangu...*, p. 2) Michoro himself has told the story: “Nilikuwa

nikifanya kazi kama market masita M. M. lakini wakati wa 1953 nikaanza kujuana na missionary, Mch. Martin Lundstrom nikaenda Itierio kumuita kufika Matongo na kufanya mkutano na wazee pamoja na sabu chief. Iyo ilikuwa October 1953.” Michoro was ordained as a pastor on March 29, 1964. Cf. *Kazi ya kikanisa la KKK*, p. 2. Michoro’s son, Samwel Omambia, has written an interesting paper about this time, *The Matongo Congregation of the Lutheran Church of Kenya*. – According to Lundström (*En öppen dörr*, p. 73 f), only one man opposed the establishing of a mission station at Matongo.

73 *BVMBV* 1957:47 f

**THE FIRST MISSIONARIES** to stay at Matongo were the Lundström family, who moved there in January 1957 after a furlough in Sweden, and Bojan (Valborg Peterson/Löwgren), who was the first nurse working in the new clinic.<sup>74</sup>

The Bible school started at Matongo in 1957 with Lundström as its first Principal. As it seems, the Bible school was his own plan, and he started it without any support from the Mission Board at home. – It seems that the SLM Mission Board didn't consider it necessary to give any theological training to the national workers; it was enough if the teachers employed by the mission preached on Sundays, using the schools for congregational work. Here the Low Church profile of the mission work of SLM is evident. It is not surprising that almost all work undertaken in Sweden was led by lay preachers while ordained pastors played a marginal role, except for the distribution of the Sacraments.<sup>75</sup>

In the first course there were 5 students.<sup>76</sup> According to the plan the students were to study for three years.<sup>77</sup> It seems, however, that at least the two first courses (1957, 1959?) only lasted one year each, the second having 12 students.<sup>78</sup> It is interesting to note that Lundström talked about the Bible school as a “school of prophets”,<sup>79</sup> like the ones in Jericho and Bethel, which Elijah visited. It can also be noted that the students were to pay cost sharing for at least part of their food.<sup>80</sup>

**THE SCHOOL WAS** very popular from the beginning, receiving a number of students. One reason for the popularity was perhaps that the students at MBS, Matongo Bible School, after graduation could expect to become employed by the mission as evangelists. For many years (in fact up to 1965),



One of the first classes at Matongo Bible School, appr. 1959; Martin Lundström together with the students

the Bible school, however, lacked properly trained theological teachers.

Most of the students had an SDA, Roman Catholic, or Pentecostal background; surprisingly enough, many of them were not even confirmed as Lutherans.<sup>81</sup> Considering that, it is even more surprising that there were, initially, hardly any studies in Dogmatics or Systematic theology. The emphasis was rather on Biblical studies.<sup>82</sup>

#### *e. The workers*

All of the missionaries involved in the SLM work have been mentioned above.

Among the national workers during the first years can be mentioned Nemwel Omae, Zakaria Makori, Barnaba Ogemba, Nemwel Orang'o, Jeftha Michoro, Francis Nyamwaro and Andrea Seremani.<sup>83</sup> Omae, Michoro, and Nyamwaro were later ordained among the first national pastors in the Church; Nyamwaro even became the first Bishop of ELCK.

That brings us to James Otete – a man with many “firsts” in the history of ELCK:

<sup>74</sup> BVMT 1957:55 f

<sup>75</sup> Lundström, *En öppen dörr i Kenya*, p. 81; his interpretation of the SLM position by this time is confirmed in the SLM anniversary volume (Svensson, MBV 1911–1961, p. 68). The explanation given by Svensson is very interesting – and, in my opinion, totally untenable in the long run.

<sup>76</sup> The five students were Peter Nyangweso, Aristarko Ongoro, Zedekiah Onger, Isaa-

ka Twabe and a certain Nehemiah (*interview* with Ev. Peter Nyangweso, Itierio, Dec. 2006); cf. BVMT 1957:84

<sup>77</sup> BVMT 1957:84, BVMBV 1957:49

<sup>78</sup> Cf. BVMBV 1957:49 with BVMBV 1959:49

<sup>79</sup> Concerning MLTC as a prophetic school, see Imberg, *MLTC as a school of prophets*, in Apel – Arkkila – Otieno Olak (eds.): *The Word of God is Living and Active*, p. 60

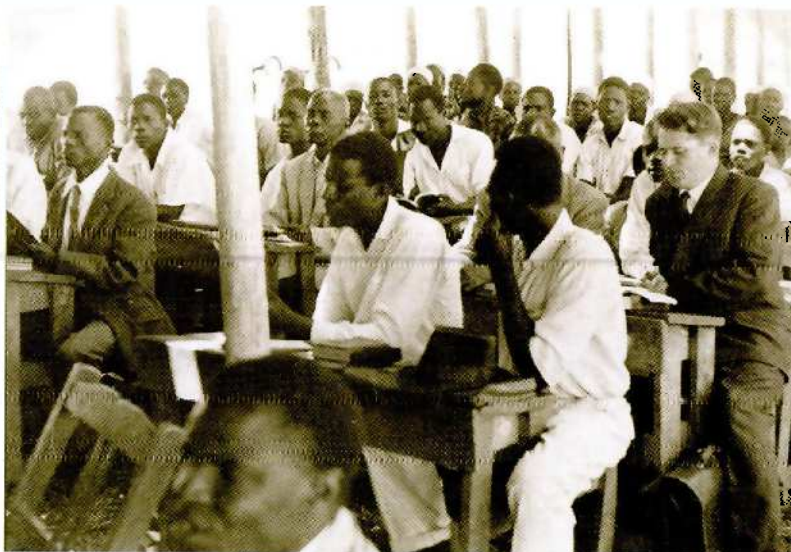
<sup>80</sup> BVMT 1957:84, cf. Imberg, *A brief history of ELCK*, p. 22

<sup>81</sup> Oral comment by Rev. Richard Otieno Olak, ELCK History Seminar, March 2007

<sup>82</sup> Written statement by Rev. Olak, *Theological Development of E.L.C.K.*, ELCK History Seminar, March 2007

<sup>83</sup> BVMBV 1957:48 f





Some of the first Lutheran Christians in Nyanza

The Lundström family and friends

- he was baptized in the first baptismal group in 1951

- after studies at the SLM school at Itierio, he was sent as the first national Kenyan student to Makumira for theological studies

- he was the first national Lutheran pastor ordained in Kenya

- later on, he became the first national leader, President, of LCK (1968–80)

In fact, when Rev. Otete had been ordained in 1958, the question started to be raised:

*When we have our first national pastor, shouldn't the SLM mission work get a new status and be organized as a Church?*

That will bring us to the events in 1958. But before that, let us first make a short summary.

### **The first ten years – a summary**

During the first ten years, 1948–57, the foundation was laid for the coming years. The work can in many ways be characterized by words as *expansion* and *development*:

- the medical work was quite successful – and growing

- both the number of students in the mission schools and the number of schools expanded rapidly

- the number of Christians increased rapidly, as well as the number of preaching places



• Itierio and Matongo began to expand into important Christian centres

A VERY IMPORTANT step was also the fact that theological training started to be given at Matongo Bible School. Even if a majority of the workers utilized in the Christian ministry had rather meagre qualifications, the Bible School was important in influencing the theological development. Perhaps the creation of MBS was one of the most important contributions by Martin Lundström!<sup>84</sup>

WE ALSO NEED to recognize that certain important issues had been quite neglected during this early stage. Because of the expansion of the work, these issues would gradually become more and more sensitive. Let us just mention three important problems: They deal with finances – identity – leadership.

1. The *financial issue* would be increasingly problematic. The attitude of Lundström was well known among the *Abagusii*: He didn't "allow" Kenyans to give offerings: They should rather expect the mission to pay for the bills.<sup>85</sup> (I have never seen any indication that the other missionaries shared this attitude.) SLM did not, however, succeed in making the Kenyan Christians aware of how to build up a solid financial basis for a Church. The present Treasurer of ELCK, Mr. John Michoro, has expressed that problem in the following way:

Since the time of gifts and donations, and compounded with the continued manning of the treasury and major departments by the missionaries, the local Christian never understood that the church needed their support. The local Christian used to know that the mission societies were the ones obligated to give the funds for the running of the church activities. It is memorable to quote a

case at Kakamega where still surviving people were asked by a missionary not to trouble themselves with offering since the funds would come from abroad. There was therefore no need for local finances and even if it was there, it did not matter and therefore did not warrant a mention and or report. This situation has lingered in [the mind of] the local people for many years...

In brief, since there existed records for the grants from abroad and not local funds, the budget of the church presented the picture that apart from the 10 % raised locally from the rental income, the entire budget of the church was being funded by grants from abroad.<sup>86</sup>

2. Another problem, which the SLM Board really had problems even in recognizing, has to do with *theological identity*. It can be expressed in this way: *How can a Low Church profile* (which SLM always has had) *function in a young and rather unstable Church which wants to be led not by lay preachers but by pastors?* One of the first trained theologians within ELCK, Rev. Olak, has expressed the situation in this way, referring to his experiences as a student at Matongo Bible School in 1962 (he had joined the Lutheran Church in 1961):

The School [MBS] had their worship at the Matongo Church together with other congregants... here again was a kind of liturgy without the Lutheran liturgy structure. Sometimes at 11 o'clock there was worship, which was the main service on a Sunday. It was not necessary to have one preacher. There could be two or more songs and sometimes long prayers from the members.

When it came to preaching, and when it touched on salvation, one could hear those few trained missionaries and the Africans mention that salvation is by Grace through Faith in Jesus Christ. But after some few sentences one could again hear a very astounding sentence.

<sup>84</sup> In his *Written statement (Theological Development in ELCK)*, ELCK History Seminar, March 2007) Rev. Dr. Joseph Ochola Omolo commented on the present situation: "MLTC serves as the hub/heart or neck of ELCK. It is this institution that trains and prepares workers for this Church... MLTC receives students from

at least all the districts of this Church. When they finish their studies, they go out and [later] become the leaders of this Church." To a lesser extent, MBS gradually got a similar function. <sup>85</sup> *Interview* with Bp. Thomas Asiago Nyagato, Itierio, Jan. 2007

<sup>86</sup> *Written statement* by Mr. John Michoro,

*The history of ELCK Finances*, ELCK History Seminar, March 2007. But he also states: "It is encouraging to see that the situation is improving after seminars and workshops especially during the last year 2006."

The Sacrament of Altar was not emphasized; maybe because there were mainly lay preachers. Again the backgrounds of the missionaries were those of a Mission Society where members of the society visit more often prayer houses than churches. In most of prayer houses are pulpits at the centre of the building. There is no Altar or Baptismal font.<sup>87</sup>

3. Issues related to *leadership and structural issues*: The documents I have gone through (and they are many!), indicate that the missionaries dealt surprisingly little with questions like these: *How can we build a functioning local leadership* (in the

congregation – school – clinic etc.)? Instead, the leadership has almost always, whatever its context, almost automatically been heavily centralized, and most of the important decisions have been taken from above. As a consequence, it has been difficult for the Church to evade issues related to Church politics and tribalism.

Rev. John Momanyi Kururia, one of the previous ELCK leaders, has described the general problem, from the very beginning up to today, in this way:

The Church has not worked comprehensively and extensively on church structure.<sup>88</sup>

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87 Written statement by Rev. Olak, *Theological Development of E.L.C.K.*, ELCK History Seminar, March 2007

88 Written statement by Rev. John Momanyi

Kururia, *Practical – ethical issues affecting ELCK*, ELCK History Seminar, March 2007



### **III. FROM MISSION TO CHURCH**

## **The young Church 1958–1968**

Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me...

2 COR. 2:12, NIV





Christians gathered at Itierio in connection with the ordination of Rev. Otete.



Rev. K. G. Ohlsson leading the ordination service in 1958.

*“Out on the mission fields the development shows quite clearly that our work among the heathens in Kenya is giving fruits. It is as if a spiritual spring were standing at the door there.”*

STATEMENT BY THE SLM BOARD IN 1958<sup>1</sup>

## 10. The birth of a Church, 1958–1959

### The ordination of James Otete in 1958 – a decisive event

In 1951, James Otete was baptized together with 16 other men and one woman. From the beginning the missionaries were quite impressed by his personality and capacity, and after a few years he was sent to Makumira in Tanganyika (Tanzania) to undergo theological training. He studied there 1955–58.<sup>2</sup> In connection with the “synod” in November 1958,<sup>3</sup> he was ordained as the first national pastor; the ordination took place on a Saturday.

Otete was ordained in a solemn service led by Rev. K. G. Ohlsson, assisted by two pastors from the Lutheran Bukoba District in Tanganyika, today one of the dioceses within ELCT: Rev. Kristian Mushumbuzi and Rev. Gunnar Ljungman.<sup>4</sup> – For many years, the contacts between the SLM ministry in Kenya and the Church of Sweden mission (CSM) work in Bukoba were quite close, and a number of things in Kenya were modelled on the structure found in Tanganyika.<sup>5</sup>

This ordination, which took place only ten years

1 BVMBV 1958: 63

2 Oral information from Rev. James Otete Nchogu (interview, Itierio, Jan. 2007)

3 From 1956 onwards (BVMBV 1956:51), “synods” were arranged in connection with All Saints’ day, the first weekend in November, combining spiritual edification with practical matters. According to the constitution of 1959, Article VI.4 (see note

39, below), the General Assembly should be “held in connection with a meeting of edification”. – From 1961, synods (sinodi, Swa.) came to mean spiritual meetings in the parishes, normally taking place towards the end of the year, while Church business is dealt with at the Annual General Meeting, AGM (balmashauri kuu, Swa.), held early in the year (BVMBV 1961:43).

4 The event is described in detail in BVMVT 1959:2–3.

5 “In the beginning, a lot of things were copied from the North Western Diocese of ELCT”; oral comment by Rev. Otete at the ELCK History Seminar, March 2007



Participating the service were two pastors from Tanganyika, Rev. Kristian Mushumbuzi and Rev. Gunnar Ljungman



After the service

after the inauguration of the mission work in the Kisii area,<sup>6</sup> was very important for two reasons:

**ONE CONSEQUENCE** of this event was that a number of Christians requested that a *Lutheran Church* in Kenya should be organized out of the mission work. Up to now, the Christians belonged to a *Lutheran congregation*, but not to a *Church*. Furthermore, all important decisions had been taken by the SLM Board in Stockholm. The discussion went on for a while. The Board was hesitant to grant the request, but finally it agreed.<sup>7</sup> One year later, in Nov. 1959, the *mission work was transformed into a Church*. – We will soon come back to this fact.

A second consequence which is very logical, but more complicated to discern, is this: The very fact that a Kenyan was ordained as a pastor meant that, by necessity, the *theological profile* of the work undertaken in Kenya would change – dramatically and definitely!

Neither of the first two male missionaries to come to Kenya in 1948 had been ordained as a pastor before being sent there.<sup>8</sup> Salomonsson wasn't ordained before coming to Kenya, but the issue was raised in 1951, when the missionaries in Kenya recommended that he should be ordained as a pastor.<sup>9</sup> As he left Kenya in 1952 without returning, he was never ordained.<sup>10</sup> That Lundström was not ordained, until

<sup>6</sup> This was a rather rapid development from a Kenyan perspective. The first Presbyterian ordination of an African in Kenya took place in 1926 and the first Roman Catholic ordination in 1927, when these Churches had been active in Kenya for decades; cf. Barrett, David B. et al. (ed.), *Kenya Churches Handbook*, p. 24

<sup>7</sup> At least in Sweden, it seems SLM wanted to play down the importance of what happened on the mission fields. Instead of treating the development as historic, it was rather described as a restructuring of the "parish structure". It was also said that the "organization" is never the "main issue" (*huvudsaken*, Swe.); *BVMBV* 1959:23 ff.

<sup>8</sup> As we have seen, above, Stark was ordai-

ned in 1939 for service in Kenya, but in 1945 he was sent to Ethiopia

<sup>9</sup> In a missionary conference in 1951, attended by field secretary Jönsson and the five missionaries in Kenya, it was stated that: 1. the ordained ministry was biblical; 2. Lundström was to serve as a parish leader (*församlingsföreståndare*, Swe.), administering the Sacraments, 3. Salomonsson was to be ordained while on furlough in Sweden. (I found this document, "Redogörelse för överläggningar mellan missionssyskonen på Wanjare 15–20/3 1951", in the Lundström files in the SLM Head Office in 1995; I have not managed to find it in *MBVA*, RA).

<sup>10</sup> The Salomonsson family returned to Swe-

den in 1952 and were expected to return to Kenya in 1953. The reason why they never returned was not revealed to the Mission friends in Sweden (*BVMBV* 1951:27, 1952:39, 1953:16.) Many years later, Axel B. Svensson revealed that one reason why Enok Salomonsson never returned to Kenya was that he was tired of the numerous conflicts with Lundström (newscutting from the daily paper *Västerbottens-Kuriren*, July 20, 1964; *E 1 f:7*; *MBVA*, RA). In fact, the first issue which Jönsson had to settle in 1951 was a conflict between the missionaries (see the document, quoted above)!



rather late, is less surprising, considering his age and lack of training. Instead, it was K.G. Ohlsson, a teacher, but not a trained theologian, who was the first pastor to serve in Kenya, arriving in 1954.<sup>11</sup>

The mission work had been going on for six years, and some 150 persons had been baptized, *before the ordained ministry was introduced* in the mission work. The first *trained* theologian sent as a missionary to Kenya was Rev. Josef Imberg, coming in 1965!<sup>12</sup>

### The ecclesiological foundation of the young Church

As a teenager growing up in Kenya I was surprised by some of these facts. I began to wonder: Evidently SLM took a clear stand in issues concerning Scripture (having a “Bible conservative” profile), but, considering the decisions and stands taken by it over the years: what kind of *ecclesiological understanding* was guiding the organization?

The original ecclesiological position by SLM concerning the work abroad,<sup>13</sup> from 1911 up to the 1960’s, can be described in the following way,<sup>14</sup> which, from a Swedish context, can be understood as traditionally “Low Church”.<sup>15</sup> At the same

time, it must be noted that SLM did not make its ecclesiological position very public, neither in Kenya nor in Sweden.<sup>16</sup>

1. In Sweden, SLM has fully recognized the ministry of the ordained pastors of the Church of Sweden. These pastors, however, were in most cases utilized for baptism and Holy Communion services. The SLM gatherings in general have taken place in prayer houses (or private homes) with lay preachers leading “meetings”

2. Consequently: (liturgical) *services* have taken place in churches (church buildings), while the SLM *meetings* have been held in “prayer houses” or homes

3. While serving abroad, all male missionaries could, in their capacity as missionaries, baptize children and adults and serve at the Holy Communion – something which they, normally, didn’t do at home in Sweden<sup>17</sup>

4. For different reasons it could be considered “beneficial” – even if it was *not necessary* – to have ordained missionaries serving in the mission field. The Board took this stand in 1926 concerning the Ethiopian work, and in 1939 Anton Jönsson

11 Lundström was ordained as a pastor in Church of Sweden in 1962, when he had been the LCK President for several years. When leaving for Africa in 1947 he was just 25 years old, and without any formal training. Ohlsson was 30 years old when he was ordained in 1954, and a trained Primary school teacher; Hylander, *Biografisk matrikel över Svenska Kyrkans Prästerskap 1970*, p. 533, 625 f

12 Concerning Imberg, see Hylander, *Biografisk matrikel över Svenska Kyrkans Prästerskap 1970*, p. 622. Gustaf Norrback, the first SLEAF missionary and LCK President 1964–68, was ordained as a “mission pastor” in 1963 before coming to Kenya, but he was trained as a teacher, not a pastor. (According to Lounela, Norrback himself stated – incorrectly! – that he was ordained in 1976 and not in 1963; Jaakko Lounela, *Mission and Development. Finnish Pentecostal, Lutheran and Orthodox Mission Agencies in Development Work in Kenya 1948–1989*, p. 50, n. 147.) The first trained theologian sent by SLEAF to LCK was Boris Sandberg in 1973.

13 It is necessary to understand why SLM has drawn so different conclusions concerning

its work *abroad* and the work at *home*: The SLM work in Sweden has presupposed the existence of a national Lutheran Church, while no such body existed abroad. Consequently, the solution at home and the solution abroad could *never* be the same.

14 The most clear expression of the SLM ecclesiology which I have found is published in *BVMBV 1926:119–128*. This passage explains 50 years of ecclesiological practice by SLM in Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya! The most surprising statement is found on p. 123, where the Board stated that (male) missionaries not only had a right to baptize, but also a right to ordain not only pastors but even bishops, a kind of *potes-tas ordinis*. (That they were to be *male* is not stated but presupposed.) – For stylistic reasons I suppose the passage was written by Axel B. Svensson, by that time still the Mission Board secretary.

15 A well known analysis of the theological position of SLM and SEM from a Swedish perspective (*Lågkyrkligheten*, Swe.), is given by Arne Palmqvist, in: *De aktuella kyrkobegreppen i Sverige*, p. 63 ff

16 When talking with some old Lutheran Christians in Kenya, I recognized that

few of them were aware of the fact that Martin Lundström was not ordained until 1962. One of the few referring to this fact was Ev. Aristarko Ongoro. He mentioned that Lundström came as a builder but later worked as a pastor (*interview* with Aristarko Ongoro Gwaro, Iterio, Jan. 2007). It took some time before my father (Josef Imberg), who came to Kenya in March 1965, recognized that a couple of unordained missionaries served as pastors (*sakramentsförvaltare*, Swe.; letter from Josef Imberg to Rune Imberg, May 31, 1994, *PARI*).

17 In 1970 the SLM Board stated, in a letter (addressed to the Head Office of ELCK, the SLM missionaries and the SLEAF Office but not to WMPL and LEAF!) that previously, because of a lack of ordained pastors, “unordained male missionaries might be entrusted with the administering of Sacraments”, but from now on the SLM Board wished the Ex. Comm. of LCK to release these missionaries from “their duties of administering the Sacraments”. (Copy of translated extract, SLM Board minutes, Oct. 6, 1970 (Min. 312/70); *PARI*.)



recommended that *one* missionary sent out for service in Kenya ought to be ordained.<sup>18</sup> According to his suggestion, Sigurd Stark was later the same year ordained by the Swedish archbishop for service in Kenya<sup>19</sup>

5. The first ordination of an SLM missionary (in Sweden, for service in Ethiopia) took place in 1926 – when the mission society already had been active for 15 years

6. The reason for having a missionary (Josef Svensson) in Ethiopia applying for ordination in the Church of Sweden was not theological but basically very pragmatic<sup>20</sup>

7. When Josef Svensson was ordained, SLM followed in the steps of SEM, where male missionaries had a right to be ordained when they were sent out as missionaries<sup>21</sup>

8. After a few years this missionary who was ordained in 1926, Josef Svensson, together with some other missionaries became involved in a conflict with the SLM Board and returned to Sweden.<sup>22</sup> After that event the SLM Board became a bit suspicious of having ordained missionaries in their service...<sup>23</sup>

9. When SLM initiated and supervised the *mission* work, the initiative remained with the missionaries and, especially, the Mission Board in Stockholm. When a Church came into existence (even if it was dependent up to 1963), the mission to a large extent lost the initiative and got more of a *controlling* position...

WHEN K. G. OHLSSON came to Kenya in 1954, it meant that SLM had two missionaries serving in a pastoral capacity: One was ordained (Ohlsson), and one was not (Lundström). In 1958, the mission got one more worker, a national, trained pastor also serving in the field. That would gradually make the original ecclesiological position of SLM even more complicated.

Of course SLM considered it as a blessing, and humanly speaking it was a “success”, that the mission work from early on would have national, spiritual leaders, working together with the missionaries and on the same leadership “level”. But at the same time it would mean that they would work in a way which SLM was not very familiar with: having a Church structure, relying on full time pastors, using a liturgy etc. The development would even be seen in the clerical vestments!<sup>24</sup>

When studying the development before and after 1958 we can apply two perspectives, one Kenyan and one Swedish:

Considering the general political situation in Kenya with political independence, *Uhuru*, gradually approaching, it is not surprising that cries were heard asking for a restructuring of the mission work, and quite soon also for independence. That is the *Kenyan* perspective.

The *Swedish* perspective reveals something which is rather strange: The Mission society wanted to *proclaim the Gospel* in Kenya and evangelize, but it seems as if it was not well prepared theologically

18 When Anton Jönsson had returned to Kenya in 1939, he made some interesting statements in a letter from Nairobi (June 29, E 1 e:4; MBVA, RA). After having stated that he was happy with the good relations between Church of Sweden and (the Anglican) Church of England, he wrote that he wanted one missionary [my underlining] to be ordained. Personally, he himself felt “free” (i.e. he didn’t consider it necessary to have ordained missionaries), but having one ordained pastor among the missionaries made things “easier” (*underlättat*, Swe.). It is definitely a pragmatic statement, not one based on principle.

19 The official SLM report for 1939 states that Stark, ‘after a recommendation (*tillrådan*, Swe.) by “missionary Jönsson” and consent (*samtycke*) by the SLM Board, had applied to the Cathedral Chapter of Uppsala for ordination and was ordained by the Archbishop (BVMBV 1939:105)

20 Two SLM missionaries working in Ethiopia wanted to be married, which created a rather humiliating situation: The SLM missionaries had to ask an (ordained) SEM missionary to perform the wedding, consequently the Ethiopians began to view SLM as an inferior organization... BVMBV 1926:125 ff.

21 For almost 100 years, 1866–1962, male missionaries who had been trained at the SEM Mission Institute (Johannelund) had a right to be ordained to serve as pastors on the mission field; the application was made to the Swedish King (later: Government)! If they later on wanted to serve as pastors in Sweden, they had to make an application to one of the cathedral chapters; cf. Allan Hofgren, *EFS rötter*, p. 34

f. For many years, SLM had similar rights; cf. Rune Imberg, *Vad handlar konflikten om – egentligen?*, in: *Till Liv*, Febr. 1998, p. 11 f.

22 The SLM interpretation of this conflict is described by Axel B. Svensson, *BV 1911–1961*, p. 124

23 The correspondence of Sigurd Stark, for many years the SLM Mission Director and then Board Chairman, indicates that he was suspicious of having ordained missionaries in SLM service. That is quite surprising, considering that he himself had been ordained – for mission service abroad!

24 Note on the photos from the ordination (p. 90) that Ohlsson was using the traditional clerical dress in Sweden by this time (*kaftan*, Swe.), while all the other pastors, including Otete, were using alb and stole.



Rev. Mushumbuzi together with Rev. Otete



for the “success” of its ministry in Kenya! The rapid expansion of the work meant that within a dozen years the mission work had to be re-organized into a young *Church*, and after just a few years a new issue would be raised: independence.

As we shall soon see, the ordination of James Otete was to lead to a number of changes, both practical and theological, which took the SLM Board with surprise.

The medical work has always been important



From 1958 onwards it became very clear: *The young, Lutheran Church in Kenya would never be a copy of SLM in Sweden*. Consequently, the identity question would be very important. This identity would be influenced by some decisions taken abroad but especially, and increasingly, by the Church leaders in Kenya.

### The work in Kenya grows and develops

The medical work continued as before at Itierio and Matongo and was well known for its quality. Especially the Matongo clinic had a strategic position, located as it was within the Kisii tribe, but close to the Luo and Kipsigis tribes – close to the main road between Kisii and Kisumu. In fact, it was the biggest (and often best!) medical institution in a large area, situated as it was between the hospitals at Nyabondo and Nyamira.

The school work continued to expand. In 1962, e.g., SLM was responsible for 17 schools (5 in Luoland, 12 in Kisii-land) with some 2500 students (667 of them being girls).<sup>25</sup> This was a very high

<sup>25</sup> BVMBV 1962:46 f



number, considering that the number of Christians were appr. 5000 and the number of preaching places some 30–40.

Most of the missionaries working at Itierio and, from 1957, Matongo have been mentioned. It can just be noted that Gunhild Andersson came to Kenya as a missionary in 1959; except for furloughs in Sweden she worked in Kenya for almost 40 years. She started her work as a teacher, but later got other assignments.

Both the medical work and the school ministry created good will in different places and also resulted in a lot of new contacts. Quite a number of

Christians were also employed in different areas of the work, a fact which can have many implications – and all of them are not, necessarily, good.

It is not surprising that the congregational/evangelistic work expanded, both among the Kisii and the Luo. But it must be asked: How did the baptismal classes function, if some 2–3 pastors baptized roughly 1000 persons in 1961?<sup>26</sup> Let us study some figures.<sup>27</sup> They show that in 1958, when Rev. Otete was ordained, there were some 1200 members in the work. Five years later, it seems that the number of members had grown to appr. 5000.

	<b>Evang.</b>	<b>Nat. Pastors</b>	<b>Mission.</b>	<b>Bapt./conf.</b>	<b>Christians</b>	<b>Preach. Pl.<sup>28</sup></b>
1958	(6?)	1	7	–	1200	16
1959	19	1	7	889	2178	20
1960	(19?)	1	9	799	–	24
1961	?	1	7	1019	–	27
1962	?	2	11	753	–	40
1963	?	2	12	–	–	–

It can also be noted that this was the time when the first permanent Churches were built, the biggest being Itierio and Matongo.<sup>29</sup>



Lesson in mathematics



A special effort was made to reach girls. Some of the teachers at the girls' school at Itierio; Gunhild Andersson in the front row to the right

<sup>26</sup> If that figure was related to the present number of pastors (2008), it means ELCK today would baptize some 30,000 persons every year...

<sup>27</sup> See the statistical section, App. 6; cf. Imberg, *A brief history of ELCK*, p. 47. The figures are in general based on official SLM information printed yearly in *BVM BV*, an information that often is based on the AGM reports of LCK. – Some of the figures (esp. concerning numbers of Baptized/

Confirmed and numbers of Members) are perhaps not totally correct, but still they give a fairly correct impression of the development.

<sup>28</sup> The abbreviations stand for: Evangelists – National (Kenyan) Pastors – Missionaries – Persons who have been baptized or confirmed (previously baptized in other Churches) – Number of Christians – Preaching places

<sup>29</sup> *BVMBV* 1959:49. – The Itierio church

has for a long time been too small. I was happy to see, when coming to Itierio in Dec. 2006, that the local congregation wants to keep the old church building and build a new and bigger one in its vicinity. The Matongo church, built like a Swedish cathedral, took several years to complete. It is locally said to be the biggest Church building in the whole Kisii area.



## The creation of a dependent Church, 1959

In connection with the “synod”, AGM, in November 1959, a new Church came into existence. It only existed for 3 ½ years before it got a new structure in 1963, a structure which, basically, remains even today.<sup>30</sup> – The changes proposed in 2007 are, however, so radical that they, if implemented, would give ELCK an almost new structure.

In order to study the development of this *dependent* Church, which only existed 1959–1963 and then was reorganized into the Lutheran Church of Kenya (LCK), we need to use old documents found at the ELCK Archives at Iterio.<sup>31</sup> But some unique documents are, according to my knowledge, only to be found in the SLM Archives in Stockholm, Sweden.

**IN 1959 THE SLM** mission work was organized into a Church called *The Lutheran Church – Bibletrue Friends in Kenya* (LCBTFFK).<sup>32</sup> Large areas of the work – related to the work in the congregations, clinics and schools – continued in the same way as before. But in other fields things changed.<sup>33</sup> Four important aspects can be mentioned:

- When persons were baptized or confirmed (if they had been baptized in another Church and now joined the Lutheran fold through confirmation), they did not only join a local *congregation* – from now on they also joined a *Lutheran Church*

- A majority of the practical and ideological decisions were from now on made locally, in Kenya – although major decisions, not least financial issues, required confirmation from the Mission Board in Stockholm<sup>34</sup>

- The structure of the work was regulated by a constitution

- The practical leadership of the work was moved from the missionaries to an Executive Committee, consisting of both missionaries and indigenous workers.

## The constitution of the young Church, 1959

At this stage, it is, of course, very important for us, to analyse the first constitution of *The Lutheran Church – Bibletrue Friends in Kenya* (LCBTFFK), but that means we need to find it! And that raises the question: Do any copies of the original, 1959 constitution still exist?

Let us start with that problem, and then analyse the constitution.

## Where can we find the 1959 constitution?

There is no problem in identifying the original minutes of the *Executive Committee* from 1959, because they are all dated.<sup>35</sup> But identifying the different versions of the LCK/ELCK *constitution*, even quite recent ones, is tougher, because many of them are *not* dated!

30 According to *Proposed Constitution, First Draft. February, 2007*, p. 3, the Constitution of ELCK has been amended four times (1973, 1995, 2001, 2002). More than four changes have, however, taken place. In the late 1970's the name of the Church was changed (from *Lutheran Church of Kenya* to *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya*), the tenure of the Gen. Secr. was changed and the titles *President* and *Vice President* were dropped in favour of *Chairman* and *Vice Chairman* (see below, App. 1). All these changes affected the Constitution.

31 When visiting Iterio in Dec. 2006 – March 2007, I was happy to see that so many of the old documents remain and that the archivist had kept them in good order. The most important documents are found in three cases/files, A I:1 (Minutes. Annual General Meeting, 1961–1973), A II:1 (Minutes. Executive Committee, 1958–1963), and B I:1 (Minutes. Constitution, 1963), all at ELCK Archives, Iterio.

io. I was also happy to recognize that many of the questions which were raised when I studied the old files could get an oral response, through Church leaders like Rev. James Orete Nchogu and Bishop Thomas Asiago and some of the old workers (Ev. Metusela Magoka, Ev. Peter Nyangweso, Ev. Aristarko Ongoro and others).

32 The heading of the constitution is confusing. It can be understood, *either* as THE LUTHERAN CHURCH – BIBLETRUE FRIENDS / IN KENYA, *or*, THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN KENYA – BIBLETRUE FRIENDS. The first interpretation ought to be correct, but almost from the beginning other expressions began to be used in Kenya. From early on, even official documents (like Ex. Comm. minutes; cf. also the following note), began to use other names than the official. Note also the preposition, sometimes “in”, sometimes “of”!

33 Initially, when reporting to Sweden about the work undertaken by SLM in Kenya

1959, Lundström stated: “No big changes in the parish work have taken place during the past year.” Then he informed about the new Church with its constitution, using the incorrect name *Lutheran Church of Kenya Bibletrue Friends!* (BVMBV 1959:48 f)

34 This is why this Church was *dependent* up to 1963. In the 1959 constitution the status is expressed in this way: “... each election of members of the Executive Committee, and of Officers, as well as all decisions of the Church and all amendments of the Constitution, shall be submitted to and confirmed by the Board of the Missionary Society Bibletrue Friends in Stockholm, before they become legally valid.” (Art. XII. *Temporary Exceptions*)

35 We will presently return to the question where they are found, and also comment on some important decisions

In the ELCK Archives at Itierio, I have found different copies of *three different versions* of early constitutions.<sup>36</sup> It seems as if all of them are related to the independence process in 1963, and these *three versions* represent not less than *five different stages* between 1959 and 1963.

In order to interpret their relationship, and to identify the 1959 constitution, we need for a while to follow the development up to 1963. The development seems to have been like this:

1. In late 1959 the Church called LCBTFK received its original (1959) constitution
2. When some people were preparing a new constitution for the independent Church (1963), they used the copies of the 1959 constitution as a starting point
3. A draft, which I call *the proto-constitution*, was prepared (in 1963?)
4. After some discussions, a new *proposed constitution* was made, evidently in 1963
5. When this proposed constitution had been accepted at the AGM in 1963, the word PROPOSED was deleted, and the document received official status.

These *five stages* are discerned in *three different documents* – all of them found at Itierio.<sup>37</sup>

I have not found any “clean” copy of the 1959 constitution (step 1), but a copy which was used in 1963 (step 2!), and which has belonged to Ingrid Nilsson (now Holmqvist), shows what it looked like.<sup>38</sup> *This must be the original, 1959 LCBTFK constitution.*<sup>39</sup>



Ingrid Nilsson (Holmqvist),  
missionary in Kenya 1960–1970



John-Erik Ekström, missionary in  
Kenya 1961–1976

ON THE BASIS of this 1959 constitution, a proto-constitution was made, presumably in 1963 (step 3). The copy which is found at Itierio has been used by John-Erik Ekström: the emendations are made in his handwriting.<sup>40</sup> – *This is the proto-constitution of 1963.*<sup>41</sup>

After some discussion, a new suggested constitution was prepared in 1963 (step 4). When it had been accepted (step 5), the word “proposed” was deleted from the document. – *This is the original constitution of 1963.*<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Case B I:1, ELCKA, Itierio; in case E II:1 is found a Swahili translation of the 1959 constitution. That copy has belonged to Rev. James Otete and carries his signature. It contains a lot of suggestions of amendments.

<sup>37</sup> They might also exist in the SLM Archives in Stockholm, but then only as scattered documents.

<sup>38</sup> Constitution of LCBTFK, Case B I:1, ELCKA, Itierio (copy signed by I. N.) – This copy has belonged to Ingrid Nilsson/Holmqvist. She worked in Kenya as a missionary 1960–70, and for some time she was secretary of the Ex. Comm. It seems that she, or

someone else, made a number of suggested emendations on that copy; presumably this happened in 1963.

<sup>39</sup> The reason why I use the expression “must be” is because it is connected with the document mentioned in note 53 below. This 1959 version can be identified in the following way. It has the heading CONSTITUTION OF / THE LUTHERAN CHURCH – BIBLETRUE FRIENDS / IN KENYA

<sup>40</sup> Constitution of LCK, Case B I:1, ELCK Archives, Itierio. The handwriting belongs to John-Erik Ekström, missionary in Kenya 1961–76 and for many years active in the

Ex. Comm. of LCK.

<sup>41</sup> This *proto-constitution* of 1963 has the heading: PROPOSED CONSTITUTION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF KENYA WITH BY-LAWS. The words “DOCUMENT A” have been added by hand.

<sup>42</sup> This *official constitution* of 1963 has the heading: PROPOSED CONSTITUTION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF KENYA WITH BY-LAWS. DOCUMENT A. The word PROPOSED was later deleted by hand, in this way: ~~PROPOSED~~

## Some important elements in the 1959 constitution

Let us now note some interesting and important traits in the very first (1959) constitution.

a. The *Lutheran Church – Bibletrue Friends in Kenya* had a close connection with the SLM work in Ethiopia and Eritrea. This is stated in Article I, dealing with the *name* of the Church<sup>43</sup>

### Article I. Name

1. The Name of this Church body shall be The Lutheran Church Bibletrue Friends.
2. Its work shall be carried on in Ethiopia and Kenya.
3. This Church is, by constitution and confession, associated with the sister-churches in Erit[r]ea and Kenya [ought to be: Ethiopia].

b. The Church had a rather “open”, Lutheran confessional definition in Article II dealing with the *doctrinal basis*; that will be seen when it is compared with the later versions.

### Article II. Doctrinal Basis

1. The Lutheran Church – Bibletrue Friends believes and professes that the Holy Scriptures contained in the thirtynine (39) canonical Books of the Old Testament and the twentyseven (27) Bononical [Canonical] Books of the New Testament are the inspired Word of God and the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.
2. This Church professes the Christian doctrine and belief that is founded on the Holy Scriptures, which belief is comprised in each and all of the ecumenical creeds, viz. the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed, and is also expressed in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession of 1530 as well as in Luhter’s [Luther’s] Large and Small Catechisms.
3. This Article II i[s] unalterable.

c. The statement which is found in II:3 (above) is equivalent to a similar one which has existed in the SLM constitution from 1911 and is still binding for SLM, even today.<sup>44</sup> – Having Article II phrased in this way can be understood as a condition from

the SLM side when agreeing with the request of restructuring the mission work into a (dependent) Church in 1959.

d. *The purpose and aim* of the Church (Article III) are defined in this way:

1. It is the chief purpose of this Church to teach and to preach the Word of God, both the Law and the Gospel, to Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, and Gentiles, that is to all people, according to the command of the Lord Jesus in Matt. 28, 18–20.

e. Further *ecclesiological statements* are found in Article III:2–3. In general they reveal a quite traditional Lutheran position, but some words (“meetings, prayer-meetings”) indicate not only a Scandinavian background but give at the same time a somewhat Low Church and Pietistic connotation:

2. This purpose is fulfilled by the use of the means of grace, that is by the right administration of the Sacraments, by arranging public services and meetings, prayer-meetings, Sunday-schools, Christian meetings for young people, by distribution of the Bible, printing and distribution of Christian books that are in accordance with the Confession (Art. II), by visiting the sick, by individual care of souls, and so forth. The work of the Church should thus be carried out within the Congregation as well as outwards, aiming at the extension of the Kingdom of God.
3. Eligible as ministers, preachers, teachers and elders of this church are only such persons who believe and in word and deed confess the doctrine and belief stated in Article II, and thus preach and teach in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the mentioned Creeds.

f. One of the most surprising elements in this constitution is found in Article VIII (about “Ministers and Elders”), par. 1, which talks of the necessity of the Minister to be “born again”. But how is that

<sup>43</sup> Correction of spelling mistakes are put within [brackets]

<sup>44</sup> E.g. BVMBV 1965:70, 75 f. It can be

noted that the SLM constitution especially stresses the infallibility of the Bible; while the Lutheran confession is mentioned only

in general terms (“fully adhering to the Evangelical-Lutheran confession”).



“birth” to be understood in a Lutheran context? – It also seems that it was necessary to be a teacher before being ordained as a pastor (“Minister”).<sup>45</sup>

The Minister, the leader of a congregation, shall be a man who fears God and observes the apostolic ordinances of 1 Tim. 3,1–7.

He should have a pure and distinct voice and a necessary knowledge of the language in which services are held and teaching has to be performed. He should possess knowledge necessary for his official functions. He must be of mature age and ought to have a few years’ experience as a teacher, before he is chosen and ordained as a minister.

Personally a minister must be born again and continually experience the work of the Word of God and of the Holy Spirit in his heart for “daily repentance and remissions of sins” in the name of Christ.

Having come so far, it is very relevant to raise the question

### How did this constitution come into existence?

Some documents found in the SLM Archives add some interesting perspectives to the 1959 constitution which we have identified, above. Although the documents are slightly haphazard, they give a fairly clear picture of the development.<sup>46</sup>

- On Jan. 5, 1959, all SLM missionaries in Kenya were gathered at Itierio to discuss a suggested constitution for all (forthcoming) Churches in Africa connected with the SLM work in Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Kenya. One week later, Jan. 13<sup>th</sup>, an unidentified missionary (Martin Lundström?) wrote a letter to some Christian Brethren (*trossyskon*, Swe.), as it seems: the Mission Board in Stockholm.

- The Kenya missionaries accepted the suggested constitution “in general”, but stated that every

mission field ought to be able to regulate its own work: Something which functioned in Ethiopia didn’t necessarily do so in Kenya. They were not happy with the expression “Minister”, which, in fact, created problems for a (male) missionary who was not ordained! They also noted that, according to this suggested constitution, only ordained pastors ought to distribute the Sacraments, but not unordained missionaries! Several other issues were also discussed: “Church running”,<sup>47</sup> confirmation, divorce and remarriage etc.

- February 2<sup>nd</sup>, Anton Jönsson wrote a letter to Sigurd Stark, commenting on the letter from Kenya, which he treated as being rather critical

- The Mission Board had a meeting (Febr. 5<sup>th</sup>), where they discussed a *constitution proposal made by Anton Jönsson*, intended for all three SLM fields

- In February/March, Sigurd Stark adapted the constitution proposal made by Jönsson according to guidelines decided upon by the Mission Board

**THIS IS ROUGHLY** the way, in which the SLM Board prepared the constitutions which were handed over to the African Christians, when the mission work in Africa was restructured into young, dependent Churches.<sup>48</sup> – It is also evident that SLM had studied the constitution of the *Mekane Yesus Church* in Ethiopia when preparing this constitution.<sup>49</sup> Anton Jönsson also noted that some of his suggestions were based on the 1686 Church law for Sweden/Finland.<sup>50</sup>

In fact, one more document confirms that the SLM work in Ethiopia and Kenya got almost identical constitutions in 1959. The document, signed by Gunnar (Nilsson),<sup>51</sup> and having two dates (Sept. 1959; Nov. 9, 1959), contains the constitution

45 The word “pastor” is seldom, if ever, used in the 1959 constitution.

46 The documents are: Letter from SLM missionaries in Kenya, Jan. 13, 1959 – letter by Anton Jönsson, Hässleholm, Sweden, 2 Febr. – letter by SiSt (Sigurd Stark), Stockholm, March 23 – copy of constitution for the Lutheran Church – Bibletrue Friends in Ethiopia. All these documents are found in F 1:5; MBVA, RA.

47 “Church running” meant that when some-

one was put under Church discipline, or only dissatisfied in general, he could decide to join another Church, perhaps even trying to acquire a prominent position

48 I have not had access to the SLM Board Minutes from 1959; they ought to make the picture even more clear

49 A document called *Constitution of Mekane Yesus Evangelical Church*, carries the name of Sigurd Stark and the date 27 Jan. 1958. Someone has noted on the document that

it has been amended. Certain phrases, but not many, in the 1959 Kenyan constitution, resemble the constitution of the Ethiopian Church (F 1:5; MBVA, RA).

50 Memo by SiSt (Sigurd Stark), Stockholm, Dec. 12, 1959 (F 1:5; MBVA, RA)

51 Gunnar Nilsson had recently taken over the position as field secretary for Africa from Anton Jönsson; BVMBV 1959:44.



In front of Matongo Church (early 1960's?)

for the Lutheran Church – Bibletrue Friends in Ethiopia.<sup>52</sup> The first page of this document is almost identical with the first page of the document found in the ELCK Archives at Iterio!<sup>53</sup> They are different documents, because one mentions Kenya, and the other Ethiopia – but they belong together, because they even share spelling mistakes.<sup>54</sup>

Let us, finally, see how James O. Nchogu, the first national pastor within LCBTFK and the first national President (1968–1980), viewed this constitution:

Early in 1963 this church followed a small constitution which was an agreement between the Lutheran Church of Kenya and that of the church in Eritrea – Ethiopia which was sponsored by the Swedish Lutheran Mission (SLM) from Sweden.

This constitution had many shortcomings and wasn't adequate for all the requirements of leading a church. Many concerns or rules concerning the daily work were not included in this constitution. Therefore there was a great need to make a new strong constitution of the Lutheran Church of Kenya which could continue to expand as problems increased, a condition which the original agreement could not do.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Copy of constitution for the Lutheran Church – Bibletrue Friends in Ethiopia (F 1:5; MBVA, RA)

<sup>53</sup> Cf. the document described in note 39, above. – When writing this, I only have ac-

cess to the first page of the Ethiopian constitution. I cannot recall how many pages it consists of.

<sup>54</sup> In both documents the word “is” has been spelt “i”, and the word *Canonical* looks

more like *Bononical*.

<sup>55</sup> James Otete Nchogu, “The Constitution of the ELCK”, in: *ELCK 1963–1988*, p. [18]



Itierio Church was officially consecrated in September 1960.

*How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.*

GEN. 28:17 [NIV] – BIBLE PASSAGE READ BY K. G. OHLSSON IN SEPT. 1959 TO THE ITIERIO CONGREGATION; THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE WORKERS STARTED DIGGING THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH AT ITIERIO<sup>1</sup>

*You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.*

TIT. 2:1 [NIV] – BIBLE PASSAGE READ BY MARTIN LUNDSTRÖM AT THE FIRST EX. COMM. MEETING OF LCBTFK, ITIERIO, 6 NOV. 1959<sup>2</sup>

*If you want to assist [us], the doors are still open.*

MARTIN LUNDSTRÖM IN AN ARTICLE IN 1962, DIRECTED TO SLEAF SUPPORTERS IN FINLAND, ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES OF JOINING THE WORK IN KENYA<sup>3</sup>

## 11. The road to independence, 1959–1962

### The AGM starts to function

Some discussions between the Mission Board in Stockholm and the Christians in Kenya concerning the Church constitution seem to have taken place in 1959. Somewhat later the Board informed the Kenyans about the new constitution which would regulate the work.<sup>4</sup> That is evident from the minutes of the Annual General Meeting, AGM, Oct. 30, 1959.<sup>5</sup>

According to these minutes, written by John Mamboleo Onsando, 42 delegates from “all Lutheran churches in the District” were present.<sup>6</sup> Lundström, who appears already to have been elected Church President, informed the delegates about the situation.

He continued to explain to the members a few points on the new constitution, which the church was to follow.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Iréne Ohlsson, *Från Karelen till Afrika*, p. 66

<sup>2</sup> Ex. Comm. Minutes of “S.L.C. [Swedish Lutheran Church] of Kenya”, Itierio, 6.11.59 (A 6:1; MBVA, RA)

<sup>3</sup> For the context of this quotation, cf. note 60, below

<sup>4</sup> That some discussions between SLM and

the Christians in Kenya had taken place is evident from the minutes: “Members wanted to know why the number of members [of the Ex. Comm.] had been dropped from ten to seven...” (AGM Minutes, 30.10.1959, *Min.* 2/59; A 6:1; MBVA, RA)

<sup>5</sup> AGM and Ex. Comm. minutes, found in

file “1959-69/71” (A 6:1; MBVA, RA)

<sup>6</sup> Note that the word *Church* is used; it cannot be understood as “Church buildings” but stands for *congregation*

<sup>7</sup> In the very first AGM minutes, the Church is, incorrectly, called “The Swedish Lutheran Church of Kenya” (AGM Minutes, 30.10.1959; A 6:1; MBVA, RA)



**THE SLM FIELD** Secretary Gunnar Nilsson, missionary in Ethiopia and one of the two guests present,<sup>8</sup> addressed the AGM with a “Field Secretary Speech”. He commented on the constitution as a *fact* and recommended the delegates to elect an interim Executive Committee for one year.

The delegates were not happy to see that, according to the constitution, half of the members were to be missionaries, but after a while they elected 7 members, 3 missionaries and 4 Kenyans.<sup>9</sup> Note that all the members (including the missionaries) were *elected by the Kenya Christians*, not *appointed* or *nominated* from Stockholm. In connection with this first Ex. Comm. election, three things can be noted:

- From the very beginning, Ex. Comm. has had female members, in this case two female missionaries: Mrs. Lundström and Miss Andersson (assistant member)

- In fact, the constitution of 1959 *presupposes* that the Executive Committee would have women as members, at least female missionaries<sup>10</sup>

- More surprising is perhaps the fact that one Ex. Comm. member was not a Lutheran – but was and always continued to be a member of the SDA Church!<sup>11</sup>

#### The Executive Committee starts its work

One week later (Nov. 6, 1959), the Executive Committee started to work under the new constitution. Some issues which were raised are of a

traditional character, e.g. a staff matter which was discussed in quite strong words. (Two workers were accused of “more or less working for the downfall of our Church”; it is no surprise that they were sacked.)<sup>12</sup>

But three issues are of interest, even today.

The first is *financial*: In its budget decision concerning 1960, Ex. Comm. expected expenses and income to amount to 53.220 shillings. Almost half of the expenses, 23.400, were salaries, going to 20 workers.<sup>13</sup> Of the income, 45.000 was a grant from SLM while 6.000, more than 10 %, was expected to be raised through offerings.<sup>14</sup> The Bible school income was estimated to be 1.720 shillings (cost sharing?). – Here it would be interesting and important to study the development over the years: How much of the budget has been raised by the ELCK Christians themselves, how much has come as grants from abroad?<sup>15</sup>

In this very first Ex. Comm. meeting, the decision was also made to have Nemwel Omae, “our oldest preacher”, ordained “early next year” (i.e. 1960).<sup>16</sup> The ordination of Omae continued to be discussed for a long time in Ex. Comm: It was well known that he was a very active worker in the field, but some people were hesitant about his qualifications.

For a long time Omae had assisted the missionaries in their work,<sup>17</sup> and after his ordination he served as a pastor for many years, especially in the Kisii districts of ELCK. It is well known that he

8 Also present, together with Nilsson, was a pastor from Bukoba, Rev. Paul Lutamigwa

9 Lundström was chairman (President), James Otete (V. Pres.), John Mamboleo secretary, K. G. Ohlsson treasurer. The other members were Jefftha Michoro, Klement Nyandara and Mrs. Gunborg Lundström. (Their positions are given in the Ex. Comm. minutes from Nov. 6; it is unclear when the election took place.) Assistants were Hezron Orwa and Gunhild Andersson. Anna-Brita Albertsson and Elizaphan Muga were elected as revisers.

10 In the 1959 constitution it was said concerning the Ex. Comm.: “It shall consist of four Africans, members of the General Assembly, and four European missionaries of the Bib[e]lrogn Vänner mission, of whom at least two should be men, if possi-

ble.” (Art. VI:3, in: LCBTFK Const., B I:1; ELCKA, Iterio.) In case of equal votes, the matter should be “decided by casting lots (Acts 1,24)”!

11 As we already have seen (p. 77, note 37) Nyandara was always a member of the SDA Church. It can be questioned whether he ever joined the Lutheran Church.

12 Ex. Comm. Minutes of “S.L.C. of Kenya”, Iterio, 6.11.59; A 6:1; MBVA, RA.

13 The workers were: James Otete, Nemwel Omae, Klement Nyandara, Aristarko Ongoro, Zakaria Makori, Metusela Magoka, Sekikia Onger, Ezron Orwa, Zakari Masese, Andrea Seremani, Jackson Nyan-choka, Jefta Nyagemi, Barnaba Ogwoka, James Mboga, Neckson Okong’o, Abed-nego, Samwel Omosa, Johnson Ongoro, Andrea Mogere, Petro Nyangwesio.

14 Ex. Comm. Minutes of “S.L.C. of Kenya”, Iterio, 6.11.59; A 6:1; MBVA, RA. – The offerings were described in this way: *Sadaka ya mwaka – sadaka ya jumapili, X-masi na Sinodi – sadaka ya mavuno* (Swa.).

15 In 1970 LCK raised 6,81 % of the income budget of the Church internally, in 1975 16,73 % and in 1979 20,59 %. (Figures taken from Sam-Arne Nilsson (ed.), *Skörden är mycken...*, p. 50)

16 Min. 8/59, Ex. Comm. Minutes of “S.L.C. of Kenya”, Iterio, 6.11.59 (A 6:1; MBVA, RA)

17 According to Lundström (*Afrikaninnen*, p. 90), Omae was the first preacher whom Lundström sent out to the new preaching places outside of Iterio



In connection with the ordination of Nemwel Omae in 1961, he and his wife had a Christian wedding

was active in opening many new congregations and preaching places.<sup>18</sup> His theological training, however, was minimal. For that reason, the Ex. Comm. decision to have him ordained was questioned by a number of people. He was finally ordained – not in 1960, but in April 1961.<sup>19</sup>

A third important matter was raised at this meeting; it was concerning whom to send as a student to Makumira in Tanganyika (Tanzania) for pastoral training. Ex. Comm. discussed whether to send Francis Nyamwaro or Jacob Kiriama Omae. After a tie in the voting, the decision was made to send Kiriama in January 1960.<sup>20</sup>

Some Christians, however, were not satisfied with the decision, and even the Ex. Comm. was divided on this issue, whether to send Nyamwaro or Kiriama. The matter was raised again in the next Ex. Comm. meeting. Even a long discussion couldn't settle the issue.

Let us now study the minutes to see what happened. Note that this was the very first decision made by Ex. Comm. in the 1960's:

It was at last decided to put the decision before God. Casting lots was suggested. The chairman [Lundström] reminded the members that he had not a such system followed at the Mission Board [sic]. The discussion had now taken the whole morning and [with?] no solution. It was therefore felt that the casting lots system be followed.

The President read from the acts 1:15-26. This was followed by dedicated prayers from: – Rev. Martin Lundström, Rev. James Otete, Rev. K.G. Ohlsson and Mrs. Gunborg Lundström. Miss Gunhild Andersson was asked to draw the lots. The lot fell on FRANCIS NYAMWARO. He was therefore elected for Makumira.<sup>21</sup>

Little did Ex. Comm. recognize that the young man whom they finally sent to Makumira in 1960 was to be the last *Chairman* of ELCK (1988–96), and the first *Bishop* (1996–2002).

### Theological development

As we have seen in the statistics above, p. 95, the number of Christians continued to grow rapidly. Almost one thousand persons joined the young Church every year which, of course, increased the strain on both the workers and the Church administration. The number of congregations continued to grow.<sup>22</sup> In a similar way the number of schools expanded, while the medical work at the two clinics (Itierio, Matongo) continued and expanded.

A regular Ex. Comm. was elected in 1960 with a number of new members: James Otete (Vice President), Andrea Seremani, Nekson Okong'o, Elisafan Muga, K. G. Ohlsson, Gunhild Andersson, Bojan (Valborg) Pettersson and Martin Lundström

<sup>18</sup> This oral information is confirmed by several interviews with old workers

<sup>19</sup> He was also confirmed shortly before his ordination; *Min. 29/60*, *Min. 30/61*, reviewed in Ex. Comm. Minutes, Matongo 4-3-61, A 6:1; MBVA, RA

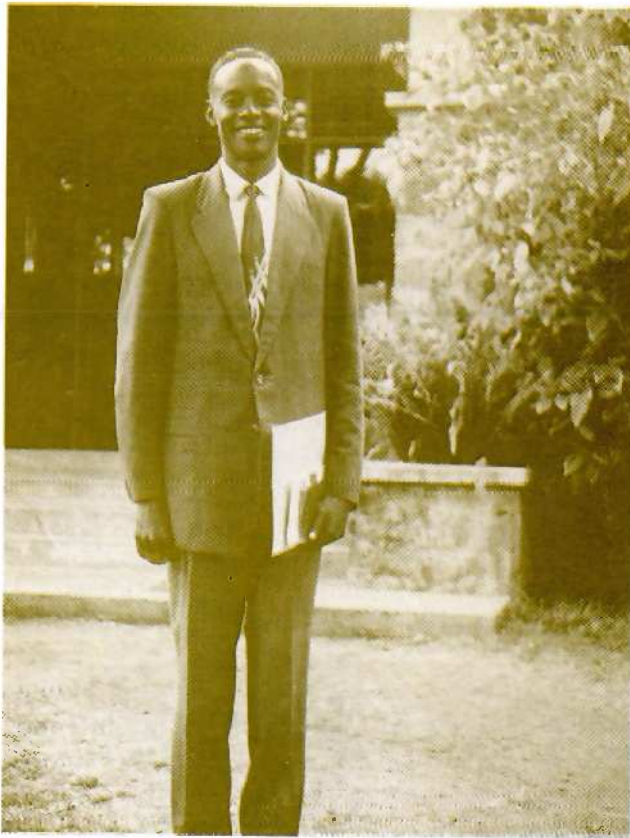
<sup>20</sup> *Matters arising*, *Min. 7/59*, "Minutes of the Ex. Comm. of the Lutheran Church of Kenya", Matongo, 2.1.1960 (A 6:1;

MBVA, RA)

<sup>21</sup> Minutes of the Ex. Comm. of the Lutheran Church of Kenya (Matongo, 2 Jan., 1960; A 6:1; MBVA, RA)

<sup>22</sup> In 1961 the parish work was divided into three areas with 27 preaching places, "where sermons were held every Sunday": Wanjare (Itierio, Botoro, Bogitaa, Mwata, Nyagesa, Nyachenge, Godchaki,

Munianku) – Matongo (Matongo, Magwagwa, Nyairanga, Ng'oina, Nyangokiani, Kenyoro, Kabukamurwa, Bobembe, Bondeka, Timaru, Eronge, Riagisuri – Luo (Othoro, Oriang, Angeno, Nyagowa, Goo Agulu, Mititi, Samangal. More than 1000 persons were baptized, 514 adults and 505 children. (BVMBV 1961:43)



Francis Nyamwaro at his graduation at Makumira, 1964

(President).<sup>23</sup> A new Ex. Comm. was then elected every year in connection with the Annual General Meetings.

Let us now note a few important events and certain aspects of the development which took place before the independence of LCK in 1963.

### The liturgical question

As it seems, the Lutheran services in Nyanza ("Kavirondo") from the very beginning at Suneka in July 1948 consisted of some four elements:

- Bible reading
- an exposition, "sermon"
- songs and hymns
- prayers

From the very beginning, the meetings and services followed this structure, something which is

seen through reports sent from the missionaries on the field.<sup>24</sup> – The meetings were led by male missionaries and Kenyan men who worked as teachers and/or preachers, later by evangelists. Female missionaries could give a "testimony", including a Bible reference or two, but were never preaching or leading any public meetings. Rev. Richard Olak, the first Luo pastor in ELCK and for many years its General Secretary, has described the situation in the following way:

At the beginning of the Lutheran mission work in Kenya, no formal worship services were held. Instead, there were meetings on [S]undays which consisted of free songs (collected from other churches in the area), prayers, the reading of psalms, and preaching from evangelists and missionaries.

Until 1962, the main songbook used at Matongo Bible School was "Tenzi za Rohoni", a non-Lutheran songbook.

From 1963 [1965], the church began to take on the form of a church. The pioneering SLM society sent a missionary pastor, Rev. Joseph [Josef] Imberg, who worked out a brief liturgy book and some prayer books.<sup>25</sup>

### a. Bible translations

The most important book of LCBTFK was, of course, the *Bible*.

Depending on the congregation, four languages were used for the Bible readings in the early period (up to 1963). Two were "vernacular" languages, *Ekegusii* and *Dholuo*, and two were national, *Swahili* and *English*.

When the missionaries came to Itierio, they had to adapt themselves to the existing situation in the Kisii area. A New Testament translation in the *Ekegusii* language had been printed in 1948, but it was heavily influenced by an SDA interpretation. Together with some other denominations, SLM and LCBTFK made the initiative to undertake a new translation of the New Testament (and after that of the whole Bible). This ecumenical

<sup>23</sup> BVMBV 1960:48. Assistants were Nemwel Omae and Gunborg Lundström.

<sup>24</sup> The word "service" (*gudstjänst*, Swe.) is rarely used; instead, words like "sermon"

or "preaching" are very frequent (BVMBV 1955:47, e.g.) Cf. also Sam-Arne Nilsson (ed.), *Skörden är mycken...*, p. 14.

<sup>25</sup> R. O. Olak, "The faith of the Evangelical

Lutheran Church in Kenya", in: *ELCK 1963-1988*, p. [24]





Anna-Brita Albertson selling books

translation project took place under the auspices of the Bible Society of Kenya. Anna-Brita Albertson was released from her medical duties and was one of the leaders of this project, which began in 1963 and came to last for 25 years! – The New Testament was printed in 1975 and the whole Bible in 1988.<sup>26</sup>

**IN THE OTHER CASES** – mainly Swahili and *Dholuo* – the pastors, preachers and missionaries had not much to choose from; they had to use the same translations as all the other Churches. English was mostly used in school services.

As far as I can see, the *Ekegusii* translation project is the biggest one which ELCK has been involved in. In the early 1980's, ELCK played a key role when the Pokot translation was completed. Later on some missionaries (both from WMPL and SLEAF) have been involved in a couple of projects related to the Samburu language.<sup>27</sup>

### b. Sermons and the Church year

Concerning sermons, it is quite unclear which texts were followed, whether the preacher chose the text himself or to what extent a Church year structure was followed.

It can, however, be presumed that ELCK from an early stage basically has followed a Church year structure emanating from Sweden, especially the Church of Sweden *evangeliebok* (selection of Bible readings) from 1942. – The earliest ELCK calendar which I have managed to identify is from 1981 and is found in the MLTC library. Its structure points to a N. European background, especially to Sweden.<sup>28</sup> It seems that the calendars began to be printed in the 1970's.<sup>29</sup>

There is reason to presume that at least the missionaries to a large extent followed the Swedish tradition when selecting Bible passages read in the service.

In general, the sermons ought to have had at least basically a Lutheran content, although (as we have seen), one of the preachers was an SDA member...<sup>30</sup>

### c. Hymn books and liturgy

In the Annual General Meeting of 1961, the delegates made the following request to SLM:<sup>31</sup>

Min. 39/61. The church to have (LITRIGIA)

All members of the Synod passed this minute to the church to have its Liturgia [sic] quickly. The members of the Synod agreed to send this suggestion to the mission Board as quickly as possible.

But before that, they had also brought up another issue – rather surprising, in fact:

<sup>26</sup> Albertson started to work with the project in 1963; cf. *BVMBV* 1963:44, *ELCK* 1963-1988, p. [16,17], Sam-Arne Nilsson (ed.), *Skörden är mycken...*, p. 22

<sup>27</sup> Information from Erling Lundebj (concerning Pokot) and SLEAF (concerning Samburu)

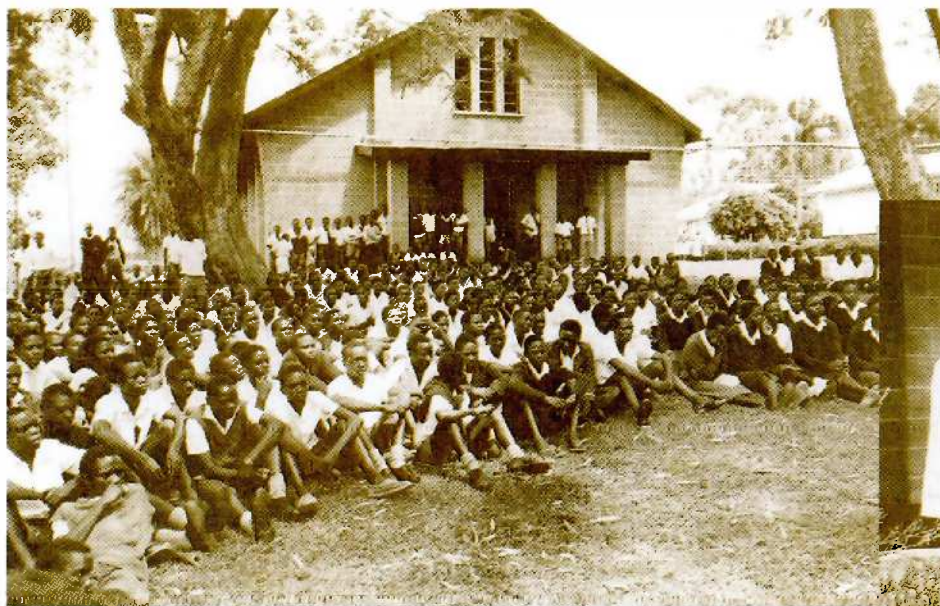
<sup>28</sup> The texts found in the 1981 ELCK Calendar are basically a simplified version of the 1942 Swedish calendar; something which is clear from, e.g., the themes for 5. and 7.

Sunday after Trinity, also the theme of St. Michael's ("Angels and children"). One important Sunday which, however, is missing, is the Annunciation Sunday (in Sweden normally at the end of March). *ELCK Kalenda* 1981. – I'm grateful to the MLTC librarian *Morgan Bulla* for his assistance in tracing old Calendars.

<sup>29</sup> This is clear from the statement in Sam-Arne Nilsson (ed.), *Skörden är mycken...*, p. 13 f

<sup>30</sup> Nyandara was preaching in Lutheran services for many years; see, e.g., *BVMBV* 1950:45, 1953:45, 1956:51

<sup>31</sup> Minutes of the AGM, 1961 (A 6:1; MBVA, RA). This copy carries the signature of James O. Nchogu. The same minutes are found in folder A 1:1, *ELCKA*, Iterio (without signature)



Often the congregation was so big that the park outside of the church had to be used



The ordination of Nemwel Omae, 1961

Min. 25/61. The manner to the Holy Communion:

There was a proposal that the manner of serving the Holy table [to] be changed. That there be many cups from which to drink wine etc. The synod did not agree but left the present way being used to continue.<sup>32</sup>

The request to change the way of distributing the wine at the Holy Communion was rejected, and in my understanding it is still very uncommon in ELCK to use individual cups.<sup>33</sup>

But let us now see how SLM responded to the first request. As we have seen above, it was a question which the mission society did *not* have as a top priority question when sending missionaries to Africa!

To start with, we can note that a simple liturgy in *Ekegusii* had been used when the Itierio church officially was consecrated on 18.9.1960.<sup>34</sup> In connection with this event, some Bible passages were read. The epistle reading was from Eph. 5:15-20, the Gospel reading from John 5:1-14. (These texts also confirm a connection with the Swedish calendar, being the texts for the 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity.<sup>35</sup>) – This is the earliest *Ekegusii* liturgy I have managed to locate and is found in the SLM Archives in Stockholm.

In order to proceed further with the liturgical development of this Lutheran Church in Kenya, we now need to analyze the *Ekegusii hymn book*. (Among Lutheran Christians the hymnbook is often combined with a liturgical section.)

32 See previous minute

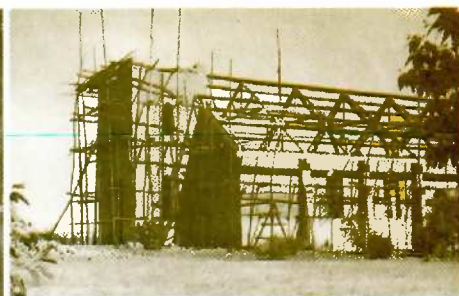
33 The only place in Kenya, where I have ever experienced separate cups being used, is in Nairobi (Uhuru Highway Church). I have always understood that using a common cup is the traditional practice within ELCK.

34 It took one year to build the church; BVMT

1960:161 ff. The church bell outside of the church had been in place since August 1957 (Ohlsson, *Från Karelen till Afrika*, s. 67). – The church at Matongo, which is much bigger, took longer time to build. It was officially opened in connection with the synod in 1962, Nov. 10-11 (BVMBV 1962:50).

35 According to the 1942 order of Bible texts for Church of Sweden (*evangeliebok*), these texts belonged to the 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity, the second set of readings (year II). – These texts are found in all Swedish hymn books ("Den svenska psalmboken"), in the section "Den svenska evangelieboken", printed 1942-1985.





Matongo station in the early 1960's



Matongo Church under construction  
It was officially consecrated in Nov. 1962

IN 1962 THE Lutheran Christians in Kenya got their first hymnbook. It was in the *Ekegusii* language and has got its own prehistory.

From a very early stage, the missionaries and their co-workers translated some songs into *Ekegusii*. They also collected some songs, which they liked, from other denominations. These songs were gathered into small hymnbooks, which were duplicated in stencil form. New editions were regularly printed but for practical reasons they didn't last for a long time.<sup>36</sup>

In 1961 the work started with preparing a *Lutheran* hymnbook in *Ekegusii*; at the same time, plans

were made up for a *Dholuo* translation of Luther's Small Catechism.<sup>37</sup> In October that very year the SLM Office in Stockholm received a document, containing text and tune for 100 hymns. The document also included a deciphering of the origin of the songs. – The *Ekegusii* work was undertaken by a team, consisting of Anna-Brita Albertson, James Otete and Francis Nyamwaro among others.<sup>38</sup>

The hymnbook was finally published in 1962. A majority of the translations had been made by missionaries, and one of the biggest problems before the printing was to settle – the copyright issue!<sup>39</sup>

In its *first edition* it was called "Lutheran songs",

<sup>36</sup> I have never, according to my knowledge, managed to see any of these stencilled versions, but they are described in BVMT 1963:18 f, and by Irene Ohlsson (*Från*

*Karelen till Afrika*, p. 68)

<sup>37</sup> BVMT 1961:35 f

<sup>38</sup> The document is partly typed, partly handwritten by Albertson (A 6:1, MBVA, RA);

cf. BVMT 1963:18 f  
<sup>39</sup> BVMT 1962:185



*Ogotera Gw'Ekelutheri*. Unfortunately, all the editions of the hymn book are undated, which makes it difficult to trace its printing history. We know that the first version had 100 songs and it seems that it had 116 pages, the "liturgical section" consisting of 29 pages. The Sunday service section was rather rudimentary. The most detailed section was the confession of sins which was very long and detailed; otherwise it just listed the *order* of the different elements of the service.<sup>40</sup>

Later on, at least two new editions of the hymnbook have been produced, and the first one of these was preceded by a trial version.

The *trial version*, was also called *Ogotera Gw'Ekelutheri*. It had 115 hymns (15 new hymns had been added), and the only liturgy found in the book was a *new version* of the Sunday service liturgy, *Omoroberio bw'omosangererekano*. The book consisted of 128 pages. – This new liturgy seems to be a slightly shortened version of the first part of the ordinary Sunday liturgy of ELCT in Swahili (*Ibada kuu ya Siku ya Bwana*), found in *Nyimbo za Kikristo*.<sup>41</sup>

When the proper *second edition* was printed, the book had got a new name, *Ogotera Kw'Egekristo*, "Christian songs". It contained the same 115 hymns as in the trial version, while the liturgical section had expanded into 45 pages. The Sunday service liturgy was the same as in the trial version, while other services had been added. It consisted of 167 pages. – It seems that this edition was printed in 1983. (At the same time as this edition was printed, the ELCK also worked with translating Luther's Small Catechism into different vernaculars.<sup>42</sup>)

Finally, the *third edition* had the same 115 hymns as before, while the liturgical section once more had been expanded and changed. The Holy



The second edition of the Ekegusii hymnbook was originally printed in 5000 copies. Here the first 500 copies have arrived

Communion service had been moved in the book (now following immediately after the traditional Sunday service),<sup>43</sup> and some readings from the book of Psalms had been added. The book had grown to 171 pages. – This edition was printed in 1991.<sup>44</sup>

When all this has been said, we can raise some further questions:

- I have managed to identify three editions of this *Ekegusii* hymnbook – but do still more editions exist?

- What is the *origin* of the liturgy sections of *Ogotera*? To what extent have they been made locally in Kenya, and to what extent are they influenced from other countries? It is clear that some elements emanate from the Church of Sweden 1942 liturgy (*kyrkohandboken*) and others from Tanzania (*Nyimbo za Kikristo*, perhaps even *Mwimbieni Bwana*).<sup>45</sup> – Here further studies need to be made. It would be interesting and not too complicated to

40 I have managed to find three different versions of *Ogotera* and one trial version; I am grateful to Rev. Patrick Atei for his assistance with that copy! They are: *Ogotera Gw'Ekelutheri* [no date; my personal copy bought in 1966], 116 p. – *Ogotera Gw'Ekelutheri* [trial version?, n.d.; has belonged to Patrik Atei], 128 p. – *Ogotera Kw'Egekristo*, pr. in Kisumu (n.d. but after 1978 – the Church is called ELCK), 167 p. – *Ogotera Kw'Egekristo*, pr. in Kisumu

(n.d.), 171 p.

41 *Nyimbo za Kikristo*, p. 148 ff

42 BVMBV 1983:86. (I am grateful to Gunhild Andersson for helping me in dating these editions.) According to the report by Anna-Brita Albertson, the catechesis in the Maragoli language was printed (a second edition?) at the same time, while the work on the catechesis in Kuria continued.

43 In the "second edition" the Holy Communion service came after the Confirma-

tion service, p. 145!

44 BVMBV 1991:100

45 The long confession which is found in the first edition of *Ogotera* seems to be based on the famous version emanating from the Swedish reformer Olaus Petri and found in the Church of Sweden service order 1942 (*kyrkohandboken*); later editions of the *Ogotera* follow the Swahili confession found in *Nyimbo za Kikristo*.

analyse this development! However, I wouldn't be surprised if the work of Josef Imberg at the Matongo Bible School paved way for using the liturgy found in *Nyimbo za Kikristo*.<sup>46</sup>

• A more complicated question is this: What do these changes tell us about the *liturgical development* and *theological awareness* of ELCK, and what do they tell us about the *identity* of the Church?

SO FAR WE HAVE described the situation in areas dominated by the Kisii tribe. What, then, is the situation concerning the other areas: Luo – Maragoli – Kipsigis etc.?

As it seems, *Ekegusii* is the only language area where ELCK has produced an *official* liturgy. Some pastors working in the Luo area have made a liturgy in *Dholuo*, which exists in at least three, stencilled editions. Rev. Olak and Rev. Gustaf Norrback were involved in preparing the first edition.<sup>47</sup> Concerning the *Swahili* liturgy, ELCK has mostly utilized the ELCT liturgy found in *Nyimbo za Kikristo* and later in *Mwimibieni Bwana*; at least that is my impression from a Matongo perspective.<sup>48</sup> – As one previous missionary has commented on the liturgical situation, with a reference to the book of Judges (17:6):

In those days... everyone did as he saw fit.<sup>49</sup>

As we just have seen, the request from the Annual General Meeting (to get a liturgy) has to a certain extent been fulfilled in one language area, where the *Abagusii* are living, but not in the other areas of the Church. We can even say that LCK/ELCK

in the liturgical field, wherever the service is held in Swahili, has become very dependent on the development in Tanzania. Furthermore, the ELCT liturgies are also to a large extent used in Matongo where most of the ELCK pastors are trained.

#### d. Luther's Small Catechism

Before leaving the book issue, we can note that Luther's Small Catechism has been translated into different tribal languages – *Ekegusii*, *Dholuo* and others. Some of these books are found in the MLTC library, but it is difficult to get a clear picture of the situation.

A very surprising fact is that as early as in 1961, some Maragoli school girls, who were studying at Itierio, planned to translate Luther's small Catechism into their mother tongue!<sup>50</sup>

#### Expansion of the work

##### – and a need for new contacts

As we have seen, the work expanded rapidly by this time. A second, national pastor, was ordained in 1961 (Nemwel Omae), and a number of evangelists were trained and began to work in the young Church.<sup>51</sup> Some few new missionaries also joined the work.

Ingrid Nilsson, a trained teacher, came to Kenya in 1960, where she worked for ten years. One of the first assignments given to her was to supervise the Bible School, a duty which she held for a year or two.<sup>52</sup> Later on she was mainly involved in school work and having financial responsibilities.

John-Erik and Brita Ekström were serving as

46 The influence by Josef Imberg, Principal of Matongo Bible School 1965–71, has been mentioned by Rev. Olak (cf. note 25, above). After some time in Kenya, Imberg prepared three small booklets containing the liturgy, *Taratibu ya ibada ya Kikristo*, *Taratibu ya ibada ya Meza ya Bwana* (Swahili) and *Order of the Evensong* (English). The Swahili liturgies were adapted from the *Nyimbo za Kikristo* liturgy, the English one presumably taken from an American Lutheran liturgy – consequently, they were *adapted* by my Father, but not *created* by him. The Swahili liturgies were regularly used in Matongo Church during his time (monthly?), perhaps also after his

leaving in 1971. This means that evangelists and pastors within LCK gradually got accustomed to using such, more elaborate, liturgies.

47 According to Mrs. Iris Sandberg, she assisted Rev. Olak and Rev. G. Norrback in 1973 in typing a revised liturgy in *Dholuo*. The first version was called *Chanruok Mar Lemo Mar Jokristo*; the second version *Cheno Mar Lemo Jokristo*, and the third version *Chenro Mar Lemo (Liturgy) Mar ELCK E Dholuo*. The liturgy was gradually expanded when new services were added (Holy Communion, Baptism of children/adults, confirmation, weddings etc. – Letter from Iris Sandberg to RI, May 14,

2008 (PARI)

48 During my years as a teacher and later Principal of MLTC (1991–96), I met Kenyan students from all over the country. I never heard of any other Swahili liturgy being used than those found in the ELCT hymn books.

49 Letter from Erling Lundebj to Rune Imberg, May 24, 2008 (PARI)

50 BVMT 1961:148 f

51 The names of many of them are found in App. 3, below

52 BVMBV 1960:25



Prison services were held regularly at Itierio prison, every Sunday at 10 o'clock

missionaries in Kenya between 1961 and 1976, all the time staying at Matongo. John-Erik was very active especially in School ministry, but also in the early work in reaching the Kipsigis tribe, close to Matongo, while Brita for many years worked in the Matongo dispensary.<sup>53</sup>

One consequence of this rapid growth was that LCBTFK started to look for new *ways of expanding*, and also for new *partners*.

### 1. New areas

The original plan of SLM was to work within the Kisii tribe. Within a few years, however, the mission work expanded into a Mititi as a consequence of a successful school ministry, which was attractive also to people from certain Luo areas.

But the network in Kenya continued to expand. As we have just seen, above, some Maragoli girls studied at Itierio in the early 1960's. By this time, contacts were also made with a certain Elam Mu-

sinde (Ilam Osinde) from the Maragoli area. He even made requests, which were discussed in Ex. Comm. that "the Swedish Lutheran Mission should enter in his country" – a rather surprising statement.<sup>54</sup>

For a couple of years, these discussions went on. It seems that Martin Lundström was interested in opening a Maragoli work, Ex. Comm. wanted to investigate the situation while SLM kept a low profile. In March 1961 Lundström, at the request of Ex. Comm., made a visit to the home of Musinde.<sup>55</sup>

In a couple of years, the situation within Kenya would change radically when a new mission partner entered the field.

### 2. Contacts with other missions

One consequence of the expansion of the tiny Church, *Lutheran Church Bibletrue Friends in Kenya*, was that the Christians in the early 1960's began to realize: The resources (both concerning personnel and finances) of the mother organization, SLM, were limited.

That was one of the reasons why some of the leaders of the Church, including Martin Lundström, the President (himself an SLM missionary), began to investigate whether other mission societies would be interested in joining the Lutheran work in Kenya.

To start with, contacts with a new Mission organisation, *Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland*,<sup>56</sup> were taken.<sup>57</sup> It can be noted: the first contacts were *not* made on an official level. Instead, Lundström while on a private visit to Finland suggested that SLEAF, which up to the 1950's had been active in Japan, should come to Kenya. As it seems, the first contacts with SLEAF were taken

<sup>53</sup> Two of their four sons, all of them born in Kenya, have since served as SLM missionaries: Stefan with his family in Kenya and Håkan with his family in Peru.

<sup>54</sup> In this case his name was spelt Ilam Osinde; later he is called Elam Musinde. Notes in the margin of the minutes indicate that his request might have been made previously to Ex. Comm. He was paid by the Ex. Comm. for the work undertaken by him; Min. 32/61 (Ex. Comm. Minutes, Matongo 4-3-61, A 6:1; MBVA, RA).

<sup>55</sup> Ex. Comm. Minutes, Matongo 4-3-61, A

6:1 (MBVA, RA); Norrback, *Kenyamissionen 1963-1973*, p. 94

<sup>56</sup> Note here that Swedish Lutheran Mission is a *Swedish*-speaking organization in *Sweden*, Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland (SLEAF) is a *Swedish*-speaking organization in *Finland* and Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland (LEAF) a *Finnish*-speaking organization in *Finland*. Originally, LEAF and SLEAF were united in one, bilingual organization in Finland; cf. also note 61, below

<sup>57</sup> In the next chapter it will be seen that other

contacts were taken 1963-64

<sup>58</sup> A brief but important summary of the SLEAF work in Kenya is found in *Salamu* 2/1993. It seems (p. 2) that Lundström made his suggestion in connection with a New Year's camp at Purmo 1961/62. – Cf. Reijo Arkkila, "Den första tiden av den evangeliska väckelserörelsens missionsarbete i Kenya", in: *Hemåt*, 2004:85-102; the footnotes are found in the Finnish version, "Evangelisen herätysliikkeen Kenian lähetystyön alku", in *Kotimatalla*, 2004:45-78



already in 1961/62, in fact in connection with a New Year's camp.<sup>58</sup>

After a short time, Lundström sent an article with the heading "Come over hear and help us" to the SLEAF youth magazine, *Ungdomsvännan*, and gave a rather dramatic description of the situation in Kenya. Of course he alluded on Paul, his vision before going to Macedonia (Acts 16:9), but he also made a number of other Bible references.

Lundström invited the people belonging to SLEAF to come to Kenya, especially mentioning the *Suba* tribe (a smaller tribe connected with the Luos). He referred to a *Suba* chief who three times had invited the Lutherans to come to his area, but they couldn't send any missionaries. Then he went to the Roman Catholic Church. In that way the *Abasuba*, according to Lundström, got a "snake" instead of a "fish" which they had asked for three times (Matt. 7:10).<sup>59</sup>

Lundström also stated that the doors were very open in Kenya, and that it was "not right to conceal this to you, dear friends and brothers and sisters in the faith. If you want to assist us, the doors are still open. Perhaps they will be closed." He ended the article with an almost threatening reference to 2 Kings 7:9.<sup>60</sup>

Let us also note: His article is one of the last cases where we find a reference to the Galla people...

**THE SUGGESTION** that SLEAF might receive an invitation to join the work in Kenya, was really wonderful news for this Swedish-speaking revival organisation in Finland. Since 1900, it had been active in mission work in Japan together with its Finnish-speaking sister organization LEAF. In fact, Japan was, so far, the first and only mission field of both organizations.<sup>61</sup> In the early 1960's, LEAF was still active in Japan, while SLEAF for different reasons had been forced to give up their part of the work there.<sup>62</sup>

When the official SLEAF yearbook *Hemåt* is read, it is evident that the organization since the 1950's had been in a big crisis concerning its mission work abroad. The call to join the work in Kenya was therefore felt as a wonderful opportunity to enter a new field and, in fact, a gift from God.<sup>63</sup>

In 1963 *Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland* began their work in Kenya. The mission friends in Finland felt it to be on the direct call from God. Their Mission director made a visit there in early 1963, and the first missionaries came a few months later.

Gustaf and Märta Norrback came to Kenya with joy and expectancy.<sup>64</sup> But within a matter of months they were involved first in *one* crisis, and then in a *second*, the second one perhaps being the worst that ELCK ever has experienced. How and why will be evident in the following chapters!

59 Martin Lundström in: *Ungdomsvännan*, March 1962, p. 40 f. (I am grateful to Brita Jern for assisting me with finding this article.) – The manuscript of his article is found in the SLM Archives (E 1 f:6; MBVA, RA)

60 Lundström, in: *Ungdomsvännan*, March 1962, p. 40 f

61 The Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland was established in 1873 and started its mission work in Japan 1900. In 1922 it was, for linguistic reasons, split up into two organizations: A Finnish-

speaking, LEAF, and a much smaller Swedish-speaking one, SLEAF. – Reijo Arkkila, *Suomen Luterilaisen Evankeliumiyhdistyksen... 1917–1939*, p. 312 f; cf. Bodensieck, Julius (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, II:1637 f.

62 Hildén, Helge – Fredriksson, S. O. (eds.), *Evangeliföreningen 1873–1973*, p. 104, 113 ff

63 Concerning this development, see the SLEAF yearbook *Hemåt* in the late 1950's and early 1960's

64 Gustav Norrback has written three books describing different aspects of the SLEAF work in Kenya and his own experiences: *En vildmarkens vår. 7 brev från fältet* (1973), *Kenyamissionen 1963–1973* (1998), and *På Viktoriasjöns stränder. Minnesbilder från en kenyamissionärs liv i vardag och helg* (2001). – Note that he changed the spelling of his name, from *Gustaf* to *Gustav*, in 1976 (Lounela, *Mission and Development*, p. 45, 120)



The Matongo community waiting for President Kenyatta to pass Matongo on his tour to Nyanza (1966?). The present author in the middle, with glasses

*God is our refuge and strength,  
an ever-present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way  
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,  
though its waters roar and foam  
and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah.*

PSALM 46 [NIV]. BIBLE PASSAGE READ BY REV. LUNDSTRÖM AT THE FOUNDING OF LCK, 10 AUG., 1963<sup>1</sup>

## 12. Independence! 1963

### Preparations for independence

The years in connection with independence – both the independence of *Kenya* as a nation and the independence of the *Lutheran Church of Kenya* – have been the most dramatic in the whole history of ELCK so far.

The political situation in Kenya had been explosive since the time of the *Mau-Mau-rising* in the 1950's. Early in the 1960's it became evident that the nation would become independent, get *Uhuru*.

Conventional wisdom guessed that *Jomo Kenyatta* would get a prominent position in an independent Kenya, but how strong would his party KANU be, and what would happen with the rivalling KADU

party? Would there be any conflicts between the different tribes? Would the missionaries be expelled or have to leave for other reasons?<sup>2</sup> And what would happen with mission property – would it be confiscated or not? This was the time when communism was thought to be *the* solution in many countries!

Everybody could guess, but no one knew for certain.

When it became clear that Kenya would get *Uhuru*, independence, in Dec. 1963, the pressure increased to Africanize the Churches, including LCBTFK.

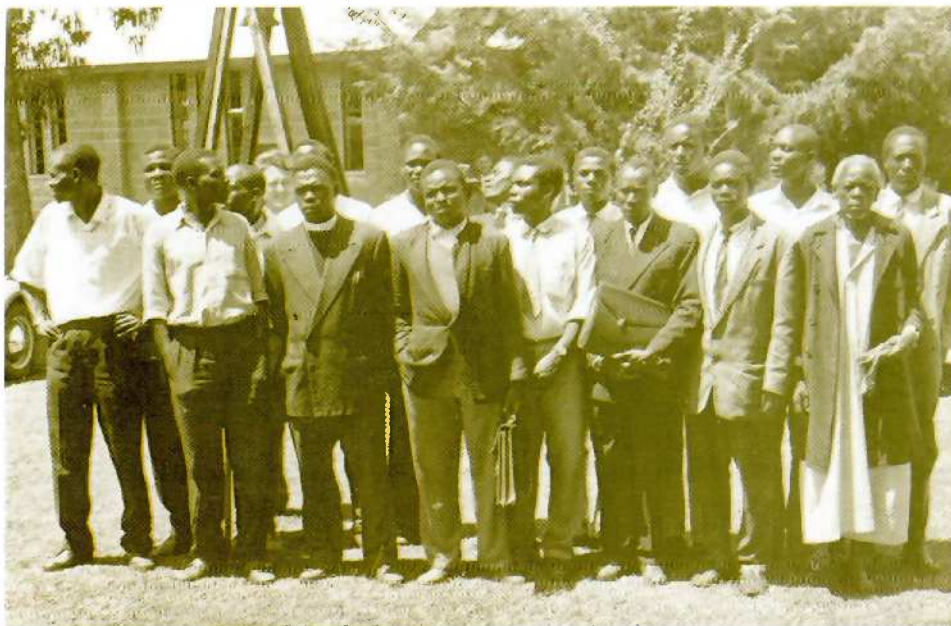
The Board of the Swedish Lutheran Mission in

<sup>1</sup> AGM Minutes, Itierio, Aug. 10, 1963 (A I:1, ELCKA, Itierio); cf. note 13, below

<sup>2</sup> Here it is important to remember how the general situation in the world by this time.

During the period 1960–65 a number of African nations became independent and many African Churches experienced a number of dramatic changes. The develop-

ment especially in Congo (Zaire) created an uncertainty which was felt in wide areas of Africa.



Synod at Itierio, early 1960's

Stockholm didn't consider the tiny Lutheran Church in Kenya to be very mature:<sup>3</sup> in 1963 it had only 4 pastors, 2 of them being missionaries, and approx. 5000 members. But the political situation was such that many felt it necessary, all the same, to hand over the responsibility to an *independent* Lutheran Church. It was considered better to have church buildings, houses and schools etc. belonging to an indigenous Church, if mission property would be confiscated by the new government, and especially if the missionaries were to be expelled or had to leave because of political instability. It would not be surprising if the experiences of the Mission Director of SLM, Sigurd Stark, also influenced the analysis of the Mission Board; he had personally experienced in the 1930's how the political development could influence the possibility of doing mission work.

Some members of the LCK Ex. Comm. started to put pressure on SLM to hand over the responsibility of the mission work and mission property to an independent Church. Some members wanted to have the matters settled in April, before the general elections which were due in May. After some hesitation SLM agreed and sent two delegates to

Kenya. One of them was Gunnar Nilsson, for many years missionary in Ethiopia and later Mission Director of SLM. As the Field Secretary for Africa, he was quite familiar with the situation in Kenya. The other delegate was a prominent Board member from Stockholm, Mr. Folke Elowsson.

The consultations began in early May and took a couple of weeks,<sup>4</sup> but finally Swedish Lutheran



Gunnar Nilsson on a later visit to Kenya (1980's), from l. to r.: Axel Bjärs-linde (SLM Board), Richard Olak, Gunnar Nilsson, John Momanyi

<sup>3</sup> This is quite clear from *BVMBV* 1963:62 ff; SLM considered the Lutheran Christians in

Eritrea and Ethiopia to be more mature  
<sup>4</sup> For a detailed description of these events, see

*BVMBV* 1963:9 ff. Elowsson described his impressions in *BVMT* 1963:146 ff, 1964:5.



Mission and the young Church, LCBTFK, had decided on a timetable of transition and could present a proposed constitution for the independent Church. In its June session, the SLM Board accepted the constitution but suggested some changes. In August 1963, the Lutheran Christians in Kenya finally accepted the constitution.

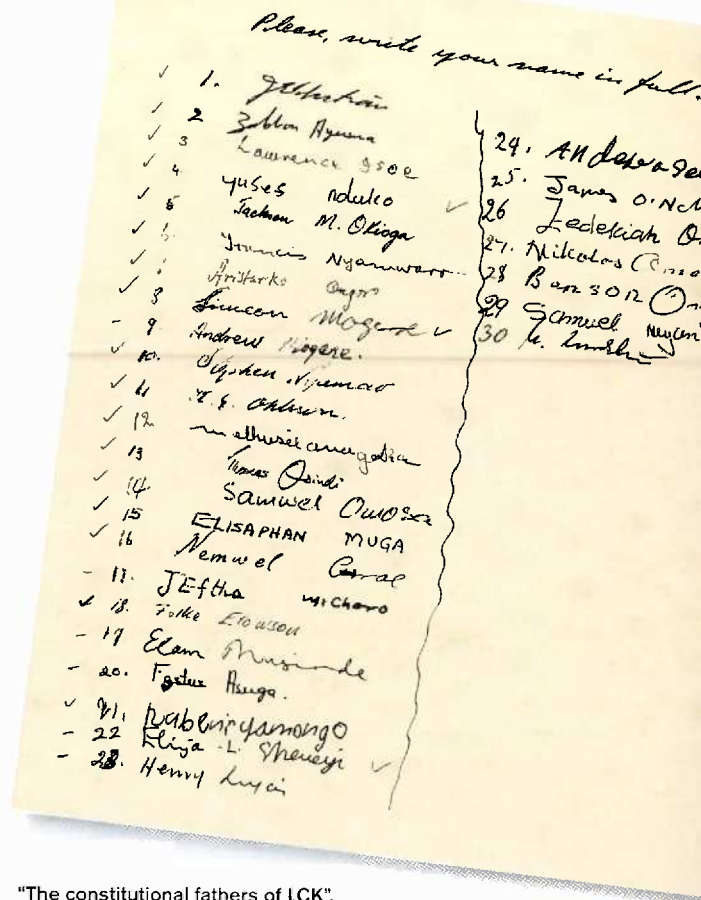
Although some changes have been made in it later, the constitution has basically been the same from 1963 up to now. – The changes have basically been of two kinds: Adjusting the administrative structure because of the growth of the Church,<sup>5</sup> and (from 1996 onwards), introducing the Episcopal office within ELCK and creating four dioceses.

**LET US NOW FIRST** study the first constitution of ELCK and then some other details of the agreement.

On May 17, 1963, a number of persons were gathered at Matongo to discuss the proposed constitution. The details are found in the document *Minutes of a Meeting of the General Assembly of the Lutheran Church of Kenya, held at Matongo 17/5 1963*.<sup>6</sup> After some discussion, the participants agreed to accept the suggested constitution with some minor adjustments. – According to the minutes, 25 persons were present and they are specifically mentioned, while a separate sheet of paper with signatures contains 30 names.<sup>7</sup>

The Minutes state that only few of the voting members were present, but those present decided to accept the constitution in its proposed form.<sup>8</sup> This means that the first step to change the *Lutheran Church Bibletrue Friends in Kenya* into the *Lutheran Church of Kenya* had been taken:

Min. 3/63. *Constitution*. Although only eight elected representatives from the congregations plus some of the Executive Committee members



"The constitutional fathers of LCK".  
Matongo, May 17, 1963

were present, the meeting felt itself in the position of deciding upon the change of the constitution.

Rev. Lundström informed the meeting of the investigations made in Nairobi about registration of the Mission and its property and of the transfer of the property to the LCK.

A proposed constitution of the Lutheran Church of Kenya with By-Laws was presented to the meeting. The meeting accepted it with the following alterations...<sup>9</sup>

The changes which then are mentioned, are all found in the document which in this book is called *the original constitution of 1963*.<sup>10</sup>

The next paragraph, the final one, was also

5 Introducing the office of a General Secretary, introducing districts and deaneries (now dioceses) above the parish level, etc.

6 A I:1, ELCKA, Itierio

7 The Minutes mention the following participants as present: J. O. Nchogu, S. Ombui, E. Muga, Z. Ayuma, B. Ongabi, J. Okioga, N. Omariba, S. Nyamwaro, P. Gisiara, M. Lundström, F. Nyamwaro, L. Isoe, K.G.

Ohlsson, S. Nyamwaro, Z. Onger, A. Seremani, N. Ombui, R. Nyamwaro, S. Mogere, J. Ndulico, Th. Ombui, M. Magoka, I. Twabe, A. Ombui and J-E Ekström, together with Folke Elowson from Stockholm. – A handwritten list, prepared by J-E Ekström as the secretary, includes further names of people present: Andrew Mogere, JEFTHA Michoro, Elam Musinde,

Festus Asuga, Elija Sheneyi (?), Henry Luyai (case A I:1, ELCKA, Itierio).

8 Consequently it is unclear who were voting members, and what capacity the other persons present had!

9 AGM Minutes, 17/5 1963 (case A I:1, ELCKA, Itierio).

10 Cf. chapter 10, above

very important and has had very far reaching consequences, but perhaps not in the way the AGM members intended.

Min. 4/63. *Letter to the Mission Board*. The meeting decided to send the following letter to Mission Board in Stockholm:

"Dear Friends in Jesus Christ,

By this letter we, on behalf of the General Assembly of the Lutheran Church of Kenya, want to express our sincere gratitude for the great help in the past.

According to the need of the Church in the present Kenya and because of careful investigation in different departments and suggestions from juridical offices, we hereby ask the Mission Board to transfer all the property, moveable and unmoveable, to the Church, so that the Lutheran Church of Kenya can do its registration under the Land / Perpetual/ Succession Ordinance.

Awaiting your esteemed approval, confirmed by your missionaries, we hereby look forward in getting this important matter settled as soon as possible.

Your brothers and fellowservants in Christ  
/signed by all 25 present/  
J-E Ekström, Secr.

This document was logical, when it was written and sent, but has had some important and also unforeseen consequences. We will return to it later in this chapter, but let us first study the "birth" of LCK.

**Independence – the Lutheran Church of Kenya is "born"**

The Lutheran Church of Kenya, LCK, became an independent body with a new constitution in August 1963. This event is recorded in the AGM minutes for August 10, 1963:<sup>11</sup>

Min 5/63. *Prayer*. Rev. Lundström read Psalm 46 and led in prayer.

...

Min 9/63. *Constitution*. The proposed constitution of the Lutheran Church of Kenya with the amendments done by the Mission Board in Stockholm was presented to the meeting. It was accepted with the following alterations...

The constitution will be signed by the following before it is sent to Mission Board: Rev. M. Lundström, Rev. J. Otete, Miss I. Nilsson, Mr. J. Michoro, Mr E. Muga and Mr S. Kinambedi.

Min. 10/63. *Election of President*. Rev. M. Lundström was elected President for the Lutheran Church of Kenya for a time of four years.

Min. 11/63. *Election of Vice President*. Rev. J. Otete was elected Vice President of the Church for a time of one year.<sup>12</sup>

...

This means that this is the constitution which, basically, has governed the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya up to today.

Let us now study some details in this original constitution.<sup>13</sup>

#### *a. The constitution of 1963*

The first article of the 1963 constitution gives the name of the Church, but it does not, like the constitution of LCBTFK,<sup>14</sup> mention any connection with specific countries:

##### **I. NAME.**

1. The name of this Church body shall be THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF KENYA.
2. Its work shall be carried on in Kenya.
3. This Church is by confession associated with the Lutheran Churches in the world.

The next article of the constitution defines the theological foundation of LCK, and it can never be changed. That means that *no version of the ELCK*

11 Miss Ingrid Nilsson was secretary at this meeting; as we noted in chapter 10, one of the first LCK constitutions carries her initials. AGM Minutes, Iterio, Aug. 10, 1963 (A 1:1, ELCKA, Iterio); cf. note 13, below

12 A number of other elections were also made: Seven persons were elected as Mem-

bers of the Ex. Comm.: Rev. N. Omai and Rev. K G Ohlsson (Ministers), Mr B. Ongabi, Mr T Osindi, Mr E. Muga and Mr S Kinambedi (Laymen) and Mr J-E Ekström (Missionary). A number of other officials were also elected. Perhaps the most surprising election was – Principal of Bible School. H. Nyabero was elected for a pe-

riod of one year. Normally that is a kind of position where people are *appointed* – not *elected*!

13 In chapter 10 we described how to identify this constitution; LCK constitution of 1963, Case B 1:1, ELCKA, Iterio

14 Cf. chapter 10, above

*constitution which does not contain this statement, in exactly this form, can be legally binding.*<sup>15</sup> – The only way to get rid of this paragraph seems to be to create a new Church body out of the existing ELCK!

## II. DOCTRINAL BASIS

1. This Lutheran Church believes and professes that the Holy Scriptures contained in the thirtynine (39) canonical Books of the Old Testament and the twentyseven (27) canonical Books of the New Testament are the inspired Word of God and the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.

2. This Church professes the Christian doctrine and belief that is founded on the Holy Scriptures, which belief is comprised in each and all of the ecumenical creeds, viz. the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed, and is also expressed in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession of 1530 as well as in Martin Luther's Large and Small Catechisms and other symbolical books of the Lutheran Church.

3. This Article II is unalterable.

As we can see, Article II.2 is slightly changed in comparison with the expression in the 1959 constitution, where it was said: "... and is also expressed in the Unaltered Augsburg confession of 1530 as well as in Luther's Large and Small Catechisms."<sup>16</sup>

It is therefore clear, that while LCBTFK had a rather *minimalistic* Lutheran statement (only mentioning the three Ecumenical Creeds, *Confessio Augustana invariata*, and Luther's two Catechisms), LCK went *part of the way* towards recognizing the Book of Concord from 1580 ("as well as... other

symbolical books of the Lutheran Church"). But the statement can also be reversed: LCK has a certain openness towards the Book of Concord ("... other symbolical books of the Lutheran Church"), but the question must be raised to what extent that document can be *fully* recognized by ELCK – because article II.3 can never be changed!

Consequently, the position of LCK/ELCK resembles more the stand taken by the Churches of Denmark and Norway, where the Book of Concord has been used to a certain extent but never received full recognition, than the Swedish – Finnish position, where the Book of Concord had an official status, e. g. in the *Church Law* of 1686.<sup>17</sup>

In Article III it is said:

It is the chief purpose of this Church to teach and to preach the word of God, both the Law and the Gospel, to all people, according to the command of the Lord Jesus in Math. 28:18–20.

The previous constitution of LCBTFK had a longer statement, where different groups were mentioned.<sup>18</sup>

In general most expressions are still rather "mainstream" Lutheran, while a careful investigation can reveal a few expressions indicating the Swedish heritage or Low Church revivalism. The word "preacher", e. g., can only be interpreted as used in a context with lay preachers.<sup>19</sup> In Article V, describing the Church Organisation, the constitution does not only mention a Ministers' (Pastors') Conference – but also (in V.2.f) a "Preachers Conference". It can

<sup>15</sup> That is clear from Article II.3. Surprisingly enough, article IV.1 is also fixed for ever! ("IV. MEMBERSHIP. 1 Membership in a congregation of this Church may be granted to anybody, who believes in the only triune God, and who has received the Christian Baptism in the name of the triune God (Math. 28:18–20), and by word and deed confesses Christianity, in agreement with the Lutheran Faith according to Article II of this Constitution. / This paragraph is unalterable.")

<sup>16</sup> *Constitution of LCBTFK, Case A I:1, ELCKA*, Iterio, signed by I. N.; spelling corrected by R.I.

<sup>17</sup> This aspect of the ELCK constitution was discussed in the ELCK History Seminar

(March 2007). Rev. Dr. Reijo Arkkila, Rev. Dr. Joseph Ochola and Rev. Osmo Harjula stated they don't agree with my interpretation. Dr. Arkkila has written in an e-mail that he "is having the opposite stand in this question [referring to the statement above]. He sees that ELCK has approved the whole Book of Concord to her constitution." (E-mail from Arkkila to Imberg, June 6, 2008; *PARI*.)

<sup>18</sup> "... both the Law and the Gospel, to Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, and Gentiles, that is to all people..."

<sup>19</sup> In III.3 of the 1963 constitution it is said: "Eligible as ministers, preachers, teachers and elders of this Church are only such persons, who believe and in word and deed

confess the doctrine and belief stated in Article II, and thus preach and teach in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the mentioned Creeds." The word "preacher" doesn't stand for the *function* in the service; instead it has its background in a *ministry of (lay) preachers*. The expression "preacher" appears in a similar way in Article III.4. It must also be noted that *evangelists* are not mentioned in this constitution but (in quite many places) *elders*. – In the same article, the "Table of Domestic Worship" of Martin Luther is recommended for study. This reference also indicates a Nordic background; the *Haustafel* of Luther has had a strong position in countries like Sweden and Finland.



be questioned, whether such a meeting ever has been convened in LCK!

In the 1959 constitution of LCBTFK we found a couple of surprising statements concerning pastors (“ministers”).<sup>20</sup> This passage was shortened in the 1963 LCK constitution. The reference to a teaching experience was deleted, but the reference to the necessity of the pastor being “born again” remains:

The minister, the leader of a congregation... He should possess knowledge necessary for his official functions before he is chosen and ordained as a minister. Personally a minister must be born again and continually experience the work of the word of God and of the Holy Spirit in his heart for “daily repentance and remission of sins” in the name of Christ.<sup>21</sup>

As we have seen, the 1963 LCK constitution to a large extent was modelled on the 1959 LCBTFK constitution. But the other document, the document which I have labelled the proto-constitution (presumably from 1963),<sup>22</sup> reveals another interesting fact:

It seems that the “constitutional fathers” at one stage planned to have LCK led – not by a bishop (as it is now), nor by a president or chairman (as it has been for many years), but by a *Superintendent*, assisted by a *Senior pastor*.

In the original constitution of 1963 there are only small traces of this plan.

On p. 6, article X.2 (dealing with *The Ministers’ Conference*), one word with appr. 15 letters (ending with *-endent*) has been erased and supplanted by a shorter word of some 10 letters (as it seems ending *-dent*). Neither of the words can be fully discerned, but the logical interpretation of the mixture of letters is this: Originally it was written *Superintendent*, but the secretary tried to erase

the word and substitute it with *President* without really succeeding.

That this is a very logical interpretation is proved through a study of the proto-constitution, presumably prepared in early 1963. In that text, the plan was to have LCK led by a Superintendent, assisted by a Senior Pastor.

The title and the office of *Superintendent* clearly indicates a connection with Northern Europe. For more than 200 years, up to appr. 1770, several of the dioceses in Sweden and Finland were led by Superintendents, when not led by Bishops. The situation was partly similar in Denmark – Norway.<sup>23</sup> But it is more likely that the title Superintendent is an influence not directly from Europe, but rather through another Church in Africa – the Haya (Bukoba) diocese in Tanganyika. Rev. Gunnar Ljungman, who assisted K.G. Ohlsson at the ordination of James Otete in 1958, was, in fact, for some years (1957–61) *Superintendent* in the “Buhaya Evangelical Church”!<sup>24</sup>

#### *b. The discussion concerning ownership and registration*

The deliberations in 1963 did not only deal with establishing the Lutheran Church of Kenya as an independent Church. They also dealt with matters concerning ownership of buildings and plots which up to now had been owned by SLM.

This discussion was, at an early stage, rather heated and created tension between the Church gaining independence, LCK, and the “parent body”, SLM. The other supporting mission body, SLEAF, was only indirectly involved in this discussion, but of course they were informed about the development. Furthermore, in 1964, a SLEAF missionary (Gustaf Norrback), became the President of the Lutheran Church of Kenya.

20 “The Minister, the leader of a congregation... He should possess knowledge necessary for his official functions. He must be of mature age and ought to have a few years’ experience as a teacher, before he is chosen and ordained as a minister. / Personally a minister must be born again and continually experience the work of the Word of God and of the Holy Spirit in his heart for ‘daily repentance and remission

of sins’ in the name of Christ.” (*The 1959 LCBTFK constitution*, p. 4.)

21 The doctrine of regeneration (“born again”) appears once in the connection with baptism in Article XII.2.e (“The children are born with sin and are therefore in need of regeneration”), but not in XII.2.c where the gifts of baptism are mentioned: “No one should fail to let children receive this Sacrament with its gift of grace, which

are the forgiveness of sins, salvation from death and the devil, and eternal blessing”. (*LCK 1963 constitution*, p. 8)

22 See above, ch. 10

23 The creation of the office of a Superintendent in Northern Europe is described in a thesis by Tobias Wirén, *Ideologins apparatur* (2006)

24 Hylander, *Biografisk matrikel över Svenska Kyrkans Prästerskap 1970*, p. 38

It is interesting to note that this discussion, which was very heated for some years – something which I remember from my own youth and which also is easily verified in the correspondence between LCK and SLM – today is almost totally forgotten.

But there is reason not to let it remain forgotten. It is evident that this conflict, as it now can be called, has had some surprising consequences for the development of Lutheran Church in Kenya. And it has not only influenced the relationship between Church and the supporting mission societies. It has also had serious implications for the urban ministry of LCK – and it even influenced the original constitution!

**WHEN LUNDSTRÖM RETURNED** to Kenya in 1962 with his family after furlough in Sweden, he wanted to be transferred to Nairobi, at least partly for family reasons (the schooling of his children). Rather rapidly he bought a house at Ngong' Road.<sup>25</sup> This was the time of the white "exodus" from Kenya, so he managed to buy it at a good price with SLM money, but his later actions created tensions between him and the mission leaders in Stockholm.<sup>26</sup>

In connection with the independence of the Lutheran Church of Kenya, SLM was willing to hand over almost all mission property to the Church: Both mission stations (Itierio and Matongo) including all buildings, all schools, all church buildings etc. Swedish Lutheran Mission planned, however, to keep the house at Ngong' Rd. as mission property. The exact reasons why SLM wanted to keep that house are not totally clear. It might be that the Mission Board wanted to keep it for strategic reasons (in that way it would make it easier, later on, to transfer other Swedish missionary families to Nairobi when needed), or that they considered that the maintenance and upkeep of the house in the

long run rather would be a burden than an asset for the young Church.

As the Church President, Lundström entered into a fierce correspondence with the Mission Board which had sent him to Kenya, SLM. His own Mission Director, Sigurd Stark, became more and more exhausted by the matter, while Lundström was so heated in the correspondence that his letters almost turned abusive.

The SLM Board defended its position, but when the Lundström family left Kenya in 1964, the house became utilised by different people connected with the LCK work in Nairobi, especially those working at Uhuru Highway church. After a few years the Mission Board in Stockholm gave up, and decided to hand over the house and the plot to LCK.<sup>27</sup>

**IN THE LONG RUN**, it is quite clear that this heated correspondence and this policy by the young LCK has had unforeseen and, in fact, rather negative consequences.

The two mission organisations co-operating with the Lutheran Church of Kenya by this time, SLM and SLEAF, learnt their lesson – and it took decades to forget it!

From 1963 onwards, neither SLM nor SLEAF has ever owned a single house or plot in Kenya.<sup>28</sup> Almost all SLEAF missionaries in Kenya since 1964 have lived in traditional mission stations owned by the Church (mostly in Atemo and Rukongo, but some also at Itierio, Matongo and some other places). From 1964, when the Lundström family left Nairobi, up to the beginning of the 1990's, almost all SLM missionaries have lived in traditional mission stations. – With one exception (appr. 1980), this pattern was first broken in the early 1990's, when SLM wanted to assist the ELCK urban work in new areas. Since the early 1990's,

<sup>25</sup> This is the very place where Oasis Villas, an income generating project for ELCK, now is located

<sup>26</sup> This is quite clear from the correspondence found both in the SLM Archives in Stockholm and the ELCK Archives at Itierio

<sup>27</sup> The AGM minutes of 1968 (Halmashauri Kuu, 21/2 1968, *Min.* 7/68; A I:1, *ELCKA*, Itierio) praised SLM for having handed

over the house and the plot to LCK. The gift was received with joy and gratitude ("Kwa furaha na shukrani nyingi"). But LCK soon recognized that the problems were not over: Lundström had registered the house in his own name, not in the name of SLM. The problems with the title deed continued for some years before they were solved. (AGM 25/2/70, *Min.* 5/70 (4/69):

"The advocate said that legally the house is Rev. Martin's because Martin has not signed the agreement." The matter was even discussed in the 1971 AGM: AGM 24/2/71 *Min.* 4/71 (4/69). – AGM minutes, A I:1, *ELCKA*, Itierio.)

<sup>28</sup> Except, of course, the SLM House at Ngong' Rd.

a number of Swedish missionaries have lived in especially Nakuru, in houses that the mission has been responsible for but not ELCK. That means: in rented houses.

In fact, it was even expressly stated in the constitution, that SLM and SLEAF should not try to buy any property in Kenya!<sup>29</sup>

THE "NEWER" MISSION societies, however, have never felt bound by this original policy, never to own any houses. In fact – they reversed it from the very beginning! And I haven't seen any document in the constitution binding them in such a way.

World Mission Prayer League, WMPL, has been active in many areas of the Church since 1969. Some of their missionaries have stayed in the "old" mission stations, some have been active in building up new mission stations in new areas (Arsim, Ngilai in the Samburu area), some in urban work in Nairobi. – When the missionaries have been working in urban ministry, the houses have been owned, or rented, and run by WMPL. They have never, according to my knowledge, been owned by ELCK. This policy started immediately when the first WMPL missionaries, Paul Edström with family, came to Nairobi in 1969.<sup>30</sup>

Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland, LEAF, started their co-operation with LCK in 1970. Their policy has been roughly the same as WMPL: Some of their missionaries have lived in the old stations, some have worked in new areas (e. g. Monianku), and some have been working in Kisumu and Nairobi. They have been very active in assisting LCK/ELCK to open up urban work, build new churches, start new projects etc (Sheltered Workshop in Kisumu, e. g.). But their housing policy has from an early stage been the same as the one of WMPL: to rent or buy houses intended for the missionary families when working in the big cities, while the mission stations, including investments in clinics and schools, have been owned totally by ELCK.

When Norwegian Lutheran Mission joined the ELCK work in 1977, they had already been active in Kenya for several years, e. g. in Voi. They even had their own registered work in Kenya, *Scripture Mission*, which never has entered the ELCK work. Wherever the Norwegians have worked together with ELCK (especially in W. Pokot, Marsabit, the Coast), they have worked through traditional mission stations under the ELCK authority. But the Norwegian School in Nairobi and the Scripture Mission work have been a separate work, left outside of the ELCK-NLM agreement of 1977.

WHY LCK SO fiercely wanted to get access to the house at Ngong' Rd. is now difficult to say. Did it belong to the general political development in the early 1960's? Or was it an act of greed?

But whatever the reasons – in the long run ELCK has not succeeded in upholding that policy. I would rather say that *it has been beneficial for the Church when it has been broken*: The "newer" mission societies, which never have followed it, have been able to assist ELCK in its urban ministry. They have also been able to keep the missionary families for a longer period in Kenya. The two "older" mission societies (from an ELCK perspective!), however, have followed the early policy – in the SLM case up to the early 1990's, in the SLEAF case up to today – with some important consequences:

- It has been more difficult to keep the *missionary families* in Kenya, because the schooling of older children has been a problem. That also means that missionary families from SLM and SLEAF normally don't stay for very many years in Kenya!

- It has been much more complicated for these two mission societies to enter into *urban ministry*. In fact, Swedish Lutheran Mission even had to reverse its old policy in the early 1990's in order to break its old tradition of only working in the countryside.

- Another consequence is also that the *rural character* of ELCK has been stressed. There are

29 E. g. in the 1963 LCK constitution, Document C: "The Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland does not have the intention to acquire real property in

Kenya. Such property will be bought and registered by the Lutheran Church of Kenya." (1963 LCK constitution, B I:1, ELCKA, Itierio.)

30 Concerning the co-operation between ELCK and (respectively) WMPL, LEAF and NLM, see ELCK 1963–1988, p. 40, 44, 48





Books describing the SLEAF work in Kenya: *Harambee! Eee!!!*, *Bara en vanlig missionär*, the life of Sven Klemets, who died in Kenya 1990, *På ditt ord, Kenya missionen 1963–1973*.

not many strong Church centres in the cities (except for Nairobi), while a number of mission stations, clinics and schools have been built in the countryside, and the investments there (over the years) amount to very high figures.<sup>31</sup>

#### A new mission society enters Kenya – and two do not

By this time, there was a clear interest from the side of LCK not to depend exclusively on the co-operation with SLM in Sweden, but to investigate

A visit to Kenya (appr. 1965?) by Anders Gustaf Stjernberg, SLEAF Mission Director, together with Francis Nyamwaro



whether other mission societies would be interested in joining the Lutheran work in Kenya.

As we have seen, the first contacts with *Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland*, were taken already in 1961/62. When the official SLEAF yearbook *Hemåt* is read, it is evident that the organisation was in a big crisis concerning its mission work abroad. The call to join the work in Kenya was therefore felt as a wonderful opportunity to enter a new field and, in fact, a gift from God.<sup>32</sup>

In April 1963 the Mission leader of SLEAF, the Very Rev. A-G Stjernberg travelled to Kenya to establish contacts with LCK. In October 1963 Rev. and Mrs. Norrback, the first SLEAF missionaries, came to Africa. Kenya would be the second mission field, ever, for their mission society; the previous one (Japan) had been opened more than 60 years earlier.

The Norrback family were very expectant when travelling to Kenya, believing that things were well prepared for them in Kenya. The Director of Swedish Lutheran Mission, Sigurd Stark, had another opinion. In a letter to one of his own Board members, he wrote in this way:

<sup>31</sup> Over the years, some 15–20 mission stations have been built up within ELCK, as well as 8 clinics (many of them are mentioned in different versions of ELCK Ka-

lenda) – but there are not many Church centres in the cities, except for Nairobi, Kisumu and Nakuru

<sup>32</sup> Concerning this development, see the

SLEAF yearbook *Hemåt* in the late 1950's and early 1960's



Then it is very unfortunate with the uncertainties concerning Swedish [Lutheran] Evangelical Association in Finland. Gustav Norrback with family will travel on Sunday, they have my warm compassion. May God help them in his grace that everything will go well. For good reasons I believe that certain pieces of information which they have received are a bit biased.<sup>33</sup>

After some time in Kenya the Norrback family moved to Wasundi in the Maragoli area, where they were to stay with Sven and Linnea Klemets, the second missionary family, who came to Kenya in May 1964.<sup>34</sup> The situation at Wasundi, however,

rapidly became so confused that they within a matter of months had to move, almost flee, from the Maragoli area.<sup>35</sup> The Norrback family moved to Matongo and the Klemets family went to Itierio, where they were to stay for some years until both families, in the late 1960's, moved to Atemo – the new mission station in Luoland.<sup>36</sup>

### Why was the Wasundi development so complicated?

Without entering into every detail, which would be very difficult and out of reach for this study, it is evident that several important issues were rather unclear (just like Rev. Stark had noticed!) when SLEAF entered Kenya in 1963 and had to leave Maragoli-land in 1964.

*a. It was unclear who had invited SLEAF to Kenya*  
The relation between SLEAF and the Lutheran Church in Kenya was quite unclear. In fact, the question can be put: *Who had called or invited SLEAF to Kenya?*

The Mission Director of SLM in Sweden, Rev. Stark, was aware of this ambiguity – he had been

33 Letter from Sigurd Stark to Konrad [Johansson], 24 October, [19]63 (E 1 f:7; MBVA. RA)

34 Anders Dahlbäck (ed.), *Bara en vanlig missionär. En minnesteckning över Sven*

*Klemets*, p. 21

35 The Norrback family left the Maragoli area in 1964. Still in 2001, when writing about the development in Wasundi, Gustav Norrback was very vague about what

went wrong, *På Viktoriasjöns stränder*, p. 113 f.

36 Plans were made already in the middle of 1960's for SLEAF to work in the Luo area, *BVMBV* 1965:23, 1966:49



reading letters and minutes from Kenya for many years, and could sense beforehand where problems might pop up. But it can be questioned to what extent the Mission Board of SLEAF initially had the same competence!

That ambiguity is evident even in the Board minutes of SLEAF, published in their anniversary volume, *På ditt ord. Kenyamissionen 1963–1983*, where it is said:

The community of North Maragoli in Kenya wishes to receive a Lutheran mission and through missionary Martin Lundström in Matongo, Kenya, a request has been made if Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland is willing to undertake mission work there.

The Board of the Association was unanimous in favour of this work and gave its Director, Dean A. G. Stjernberg the task to request permission from the general secretary of the [National] Christian Council, Dr. Calderwood, to open mission work in North Maragoli.<sup>37</sup>

This statement is very revealing in at least three ways. Several important questions can be raised:

The community of Maragoli is mentioned, but nothing is said about the general situation. Was it realistic to start with mission work in an area where other Christian denominations had been working for decades, e. g. Anglicans? No such analysis was made when entering that area.<sup>38</sup>

Why is the Lutheran Church of Kenya *not* mentioned? What would the relationship be between the SLEAF missionaries and LCK?

What role did Martin Lundström play? When he recommended SLEAF to enter Kenya – did he act as the LCK President or, as it looks, as a “private person”?

#### *b. The relationship to LCK was unclear*

SLEAF had been called to the Maragoli area – but to what extent was the Lutheran Church in Kenya involved in that?<sup>39</sup> According to Norrback, the Executive Committee of LCK had invited the Finnish mission to come to Kenya.<sup>40</sup> If that is correct – why was it not said in the minutes of the SLEAF Board?

There was someone who really wanted SLEAF to join the Maragoli area, and that was Elam Musinde, a local Maragoli leader and a trusted friend of Martin Lundström.<sup>41</sup> In fact, Musinde was interested in creating an independent, Lutheran Church in his home area. SLEAF, however, had no interest in being involved in creating a *second*, Lutheran Church in Kenya! This means that without any prior knowledge, the Finnish missionaries immediately got involved in a tug of war between LCK and a strong leader in the Maragoli community.<sup>42</sup>

#### *c. The property situation at Wasundi unclear*

It was also uncertain who owned the plot at Wasundi. Sven Klemets, who came with his family to Kenya in 1964, and was designated to build up the mission station, didn’t want to start any building projects before that was clear.<sup>43</sup> The uncertainty concerning the Wasundi plot continued for years and years. The issue was still discussed in the 1990’s in the Executive Committee of ELCK; it seems it was finally solved in 1994.<sup>44</sup>

#### *d. The position of Elam Musinde was unclear*

It must also be recognized that the position of Elam Musinde also influenced the development. Perhaps it was, in fact, the most important element of all.

Martin Lundström was very impressed by him, as we just have seen, and Gustaf Norrback confirmed

37 Copy of the minutes of the Board Meeting of SLEAF, Jan. 3, 1963, in: Hildén – Klemets – Norrback (eds.), *På ditt ord. Kenyamissionen 1963–1983*, p. 12 (also in Norrback, *Kenyamissionen 1963–1973*, p. 69 f)

38 In his book *Kenyamissionen 1963–1973* (p. 83 f; printed 1998), Norrback made that kind of analysis which had been important to make before entering Maragoli-land!

39 See Norrback, *Kenyamissionen 1963–1973*, esp. p. 100

40 Norrback, *Kenyamissionen 1963–1973*, esp. p. 69

41 In a letter to James Otete (Nairobi, Dec. 20, 1963 – E II:1, ELCKA, Interio), Lundström described Musinde as “a chosen vessel of God in guiding our Brothers from Finland to come and help”

42 Norrback, *Kenyamissionen 1963–1973*, p. 74. – His statement concerning Ex. Comm.

ought to be found in the the minutes; I have not been able to confirm it.

43 *Evangeliföreningen 1873–1973*, p. 49 f

44 I was very surprised to notice in the 1990’s, as a member of the Ex. Comm. of ELCK, that the issue of the title deed of Wasundi still was not solved. According to Lundebj, *Vekst og modning – tilbakeslag og kriser* (p. 33, n. 11), in: *Budskap 2006*, the issue was settled after some 30 years – in 1994!



that Musinde was a “born leader” in his community.<sup>45</sup> But Musinde was a rather dominant personality, with clear personal ambitions. According to Norrback, the *Wasundi parish* was even, originally, called *Musinde parish*.<sup>46</sup>

One basic problem is easy to discern: Many of the early contacts with the Maragoli community went almost exclusively through Musinde. As we have seen, his real wish was to have a local, independent Lutheran Church in the Maragoli area, something which the Finnish mission had no interest in being involved in.<sup>47</sup>

After just a matter of months, a total breakdown came between the SLEAF missionaries and Musinde. The Finnish families had to leave the Maragoli area quite rapidly. The Klemets family went to Itierio in July 1964 and the Norrback family to Matongo in August, where they stayed for some years. Later the two families were united at Atemo, when that mission station began to be built up.

The fact that Musinde had a special personality is easily seen through his later development. After a short time, he founded an *Independent Lutheran Church*. In fact – it seems that it had started as early as in 1961! According to the Kenya Churches Handbook, his title in 1973 was “Patriarch: Bishop (Rabbi)”, while his Church was described in the following way:

An independent Luhya church founded in 1961 as the African Lutheran Church, and also known as the Loyalists, or Loyalist Religion. Dioceses of Baluyia and Nyanza. No foreign workers, but receives aid from Sweden.<sup>48</sup>

While still the President of LCK, Lundström also investigated whether two other mission societies could join the Lutheran work in Kenya.

Some correspondence was made with a German missionary, belonging to the Breklum society. Lundström was eager to get German missionaries to come to Kenya, but those contacts didn’t lead very far.<sup>49</sup>

**MORE SERIOUS CONTACTS** were taken with the Norwegian *Santal Mission*, and in 1964 they even sent a high ranking delegation to Kenya – who happened to come in the middle of the big crisis which came upon LCK.<sup>50</sup>

We will return to their response in the next chapter.

### The Nairobi (and Mombasa) work

While still working as a missionary in Kenya, Martin Lundström had big visions concerning the work in Nairobi. In 1963 he got a golden opportunity to open up an urban work in Nairobi.

When a number of White settlers left Kenya in 1963, a congregation in Nairobi, Dutch Reformed Church, wanted to sell its church building together with the plot at Uhuru Highway. (The church building was originally built by Scottish Presbyterians.<sup>51</sup>)

The church was offered for sale, and a Swedish businessman wanted to pull down the building and instead erect a sales office for Volvo there. But Lundström had other plans. Without any official decision being made (either by LCK in Kenya or the SLM Board in Sweden), he privately bought the church, on behalf of LCK, for 40.000 Shillings.

45 Norrback, *På Viktoriasjöns stränder*, p. 113

46 Norrback, *Kenyamissionen 1963–1973*, p. 69 f

47 An interesting and important question is this: When did the SLEAF Board recognize this problem, that their missionaries were like pawns in a game? The steps taken both by LCK (through Ex. Comm.) and SLM (through its office in Stockholm), shows how hesitant they were in their Maragoli contacts.

48 David B. Barrett, et al. (ed.), *Kenya Churches Handbook*, p. 244

49 Letter by Lundström to a German mis-

sionary (Dec. 20, 1963 – E II:1, ELCKA, Itierio): Lundström expected German missionaries to start working to Kenya, and talks were made with a Breklum [society] missionary. Nothing, however, came out of these contacts.

50 As Acting President of LCK, Rev. Otete prepared an interesting memo which was discussed in September 1964 with representatives from the Santal Mission and Lutheran World Federation, *The Main Points to be discussed between the Santal Mission delegates and the Lutheran Church of Kenya* (E II:1, ELCKA, Itierio)

51 The church was built appr. 1910 and seems

to be the oldest Church in Nairobi (the city started to be built in connection with building the Uganda railway). – When ELCK in the 1970’s built a new church on the premises, the old church building was pulled down in pieces, moved across the street, and re-erected in the compound of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church. Opposite the Lutheran Church, in another direction, is a Roman Catholic church. With four church buildings, just a few meters from one another, it is no wonder that the area locally is known as “God’s corner”... (Kate Macintyre, *The Nairobi Guide*, p. 100 f)



Uhuru Highway Church in the 1960's



In 2006, ELCK started to build up a new Church centre in Nairobi close to the Uhuru Highway Cathedral. The author visiting the building site together with Bishop Obare

It took him some two days to get a loan from Lutheran World Federation, LWF, in Switzerland.<sup>52</sup> – Although the plot is rather small, the location is one of best in Nairobi. The Church has recently got a status as ELCK cathedral.

When the church had been bought, services were held in different languages: Swahili, English, German, Swedish/Scandinavian languages etc. Lundström had far reaching plans how the Uhuru Highway church could be used, serving different communities and ethnic groups in Nairobi and Kenya.<sup>53</sup>

Because LCK didn't have many trained workers

by this time, the Church entered talks with the Lutheran Church in Tanzania, ELCT, whether they could assist the work in Nairobi and Mombasa. An agreement was made, and ELCT sent some workers.<sup>54</sup>

It didn't take long time, however, until the the co-operation got stuck. After a while, some of these workers were not interested in being led from the LCK Head office at Itierio. Instead they took the initiative to establish a new Church called *Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church*.<sup>55</sup>

The Lutheran Church of Kenya tried to solve the

<sup>52</sup> For a short while, before the registration of LCK was completed, Rev. Otete was registered as the owner of the church plot and building! (Lundström, *En öppen dörr i Kenya*, p. 95)

<sup>53</sup> This is evident from his correspondence (e.g. 25 March, 1964 *E II:1*, *ELCKA*, Itierio) in the file. – The autobiography of Bob Ward is very interesting concerning the later development of the Nairobi work; for many years he served at Uhuru Highway

Church (Bob Ward, *Messengers of Love*, p. 252 ff)

<sup>54</sup> It is very clear from the correspondence (a special section in case *E II:1*, *ELCKA*, Itierio) that ELCT was to *support* the work undertaken by LCK in Nairobi and Mombasa, not undertake any work on its own

<sup>55</sup> The KELC Church was established as early as in 1967 in Nairobi and Mombasa. In 1968, after talks between ELCK and LCK, the Church in Tanzania "had therefore de-

termined to resume work in Kenya on condition that the KELC organization be disbanded". (Memo from meeting in Arusha, 18 Jan. 1968, with representatives from ELCT and LCK; case *E II:1*, *ELCKA*, Itierio.)



problem together with the Lutheran sister church in Tanzania,<sup>56</sup> but did not succeed in doing so. Instead ELCT gradually established its own work in Nairobi, which developed into the *ELCT Kenya Synod*. Later on that organisation has, once more, developed into an independent Church, which revived the name *Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church*.<sup>57</sup>

For many years, at least since the 1980's, there have been merger talks between these two Lutheran

Churches in Kenya, and some high profile statements have been made, but so far very little has come out from these talks.

Most of the KELC members are found in Nairobi and the Mombasa area, and many of them have a connection with ELCT. There is also a great difference in the theological profile – ELCK is well known as a theologically conservative Church, while KELC has a more liberal profile.



John-Erik Ekström was very active in the school work of LCK. Here together with students and staff in Matongo Secondary School (middle of the 1960's)

<sup>56</sup> The matter was even discussed by Lutheran World Federation at a meeting in Austria, April 1967 (case *E II:1, ELCKA, Itierio*). LWF was strongly against any split

in Kenya, and couldn't see the need of two separate Lutheran Churches.

<sup>57</sup> Erling Lundebj takes up some of the aspects of the relationship between ELCK

and KELC in his paper *Vekst og modning – tilbakeslag og krise* (p. 44 ff), in: *Budskap* 2006



*Twendeni askari, watu wa Mungu; / Yesu yuko mbele, tumwandame juu;  
/ Ametangulia Bwana vitani, / Twende mbele kwani ndiye amini.  
/ Twende askari watu wa Mungu; / Yesu yuko mbele, tumwandame juu.*

*Onward, Christian soldiers! marching as to war, / Looking unto Jesus, who is gone before.  
/ Christ, the Royal Master, leads against the foe; / Forward into battle see his banners go.  
/ Onward, Christian soldiers! marching as to war, / Looking unto Jesus, who is gone before.<sup>1</sup>*

SONG WHICH WAS SUNG AT THE END OF AGM IN SEPT. 1964, WHEN REV. GUSTAF NORRBACK  
JUST HAD BEEN ELECTED AS THE NEW PRESIDENT OF LCK

*Sometimes, when I write [committee] minutes,  
I am amused by the thought that they are a small piece of Church history...  
now LCK is finally registered in the Ministry of Land and Settlement.*

J-E EKSTRÖM TO THE SLM MISSION DIRECTOR, SIGURD STARK, MARCH 27, 1965<sup>2</sup>

## 13. From crisis to consolidation, 1964–1968

IF THE POLITICAL TRANSITION from colonial rule to African independence in Kenya was surprisingly calm, the development within the tiny Lutheran Church of Kenya was more stormy, and a severe crisis came in 1964.<sup>3</sup>

The Lutheran Church in Kenya had just got its independence, when it was hit by a conflict which, perhaps, is the biggest one it has ever experienced.

This crisis happened to coincide with the independence of the nation, so the stability of the Church was really put into question. As we will see, some persons were even discussing whether LCK should cut the ties with the parent organization, Swedish Lutheran Mission, and join the Lutheran Church in Tanzania. But LCK succeeded (with God's help!) in coming through the crisis – and the period from 1964 up to 1968 can be described as a *crisis* which led to a kind of *consolidation*, followed by a long time of growth and expansion.

Let us now start by describing the crisis, then study how it was solved and finally see how the consolidation can be described and explained.

### The crisis in 1964

When the documents from the mission work done in the period up to 1964 are read today, it is evident that the pot was boiling, and that this had been going on for many years. Something had to happen sooner or later, either *inside the Church* or, *among the missionaries*. As it turned out, two of the three Swedish missionary families (the Lundström and Ohlsson families) had to leave Kenya and LCK in 1964. Four missionaries – between them having some 50 years of experience in Kenya – had to leave in a couple of months, without ever being able to return to the country, except as tourists.

Why did this crisis, then, take place?

Many reasons can, of course, be given – some on

<sup>1</sup> The song *Twendeni askari*, No. 69 in *Tenzi za Rohoni* ("Onward, Christian soldiers!"; No. 706 in Sankey, *Sacred Songs and Solos*), was sung at the end of the AGM in Sept. 1964, when Rev. Gustaf Norrback just had been elected as the new President of LCK (cf. note 20, below). At the opening of the meeting, the hymn "Nearer my God, to thee" had been sung (*Tenzi za Rohoni*,

129) and Rev. Otete read 1 Tim. 3:1–7.  
<sup>2</sup> Letter, J-E Ekström to S Stark, 27 March, 1965 (box with letters from the Ekström family, MBVA, RA; quotation taken from Imberg, *A brief history of ELCK*, p. 7, note 8)

<sup>3</sup> The most important official documents concerning this conflict are the minutes of the three AGM meetings held in 1964:

Febr. 29, May 28, and September 26 (case A 1:1, ELCKA, Itierio). The SLM position, and some official statements, are found in BVMBV 1963, 1964 and BVMT 1964. A number of letters illuminating the conflict are found in the official archives (ELCKA, Itierio, and MBVA, RA).

a personal level, some on a more “structural”, i.e. related to how the Church and SLM functioned by this time. Let us start with the official documents, and then widen the perspective.

#### a. *The sources*

To start with, we can note that Swedish Lutheran Mission was rather open in its description of the crisis. When the official documents are studied, it is clear that the Mission Board was not surprised when it occurred. SLM even indicated that a total break between the Swedish mission organization and the Lutheran Church of Kenya might come.<sup>4</sup>

The persons who were in the centre of the events – the Lundström and Ohlsson families – have not been very willing to explain publicly what really happened. Martin Lundström wrote two books about his experiences in Kenya, but there is hardly one word about the 1964 crisis.<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Ohlsson has written with many details about the life of her family in Kenya (up to 1964) and in Eritrea (from 1968) – but deliberately she has left out the events in 1964.<sup>6</sup>

However, it is sufficient to read the official LCK documents in order to get a general idea of what happened.<sup>7</sup> When the correspondence also is analysed (either in the ELCK Archives at Itierio, or, in the SLM Archives in Stockholm), still more details become clear. Let us now see what the AGM minutes tell us about the events in 1964.<sup>8</sup>

#### b. *The official statements*

To start with, we can notice that not less than three AGM were held in 1964:

- Matongo, Febr. 29
- Matongo, May 28
- Itierio, Sept. 26

The first AGM, an ordinary one, was held at Matongo with James Otete as chairman. Surprisingly enough, Martin Lundström was away on other business.<sup>9</sup>

Concerning the decisions at that meeting, the following ones are of special interest; it is also important to notice the order of the minutes:

Min 7/64. *Need of more Missionaries.* The need of more Missionaries was expressed and it was decided to ask the Mission Boards in Sweden and Finland for the following [9 specific positions are then mentioned]:

— — —

Min. 11/64. *Missionaries to be returned.* Parts of the letter from the Mission Board in Stockholm to the Executive Committee, dated 19<sup>th</sup> February, was read and also parts of the letter from the President to Pastor Stark, dated 25<sup>th</sup> February. After a discussion it was decided that Rev. Ohlsson should leave his work.

— — —

Min. 24/64. *Reasons for Rev. Ohlsson's leaving.*

1. Breaking the Constitution
2. Despising African Christians.
3. Behaving more like a Government servant than like a Missionary in his work.
4. No co-operation with African Christians since he came to Africa.<sup>10</sup>

The situation was so tense at the meeting that the other missionaries even feared for the safety of Rev. Ohlsson.<sup>11</sup>

4 BVMBV 1963:60 ff, 1964:15 ff; cf. also BVMT 1963 and 1964

5 Lundström, *Afrikaminnen* and *En öppen dörr i Kenya*

6 The description of the events in 1964 should have come on p. 86 in her book *Från Karelen till Afrika*, but she just gets silent, without giving any explanation

7 In my case, I have had access to all the AGM minutes, but only to a certain extent the Ex. Comm. minutes

8 It can be noted here that I tried in 1995 to get information from Mrs. Lundström about the events in 1964, but she could not refer to any important documents related to the conflict, like diaries etc. (But

she gave one surprising explanation for the conflict: She and her husband were the only missionaries from northern Sweden, while all the others came from the southern part. *Interview* with Mrs. Lundström, Jan. 1995.) As I have not been able to get any information from the Lundström side, I have decided not to interview KG and Irene Ohlsson about their view. Instead I have totally relied on the official documents (AGM minutes, etc.) and official letters, mainly between Lundström and Stark (found both in *ELCKA*, Itierio, and in *MBVA*, RA).

9 In a letter to Sigurd Stark a few days later, Lundström explains that he did not partici-

pate in the meeting, but he saw it as an act of God that he had other pressing commitments. (In fact he was surveying a plot in Maragoli on behalf of Rev. Norrback who was sick.) That is a rather strange statement, considering that he was the Church President. (*Copy of letter* from Lundström to Stark, March 4, 1964, in: *E 1 f:7*; *MBVA*, RA).

10 AGM Minutes, Febr. 29, 1964 (*A 1:1*; *ELCKA*, Itierio)

11 This is evident from letters to Sigurd Stark from the missionaries, e.g. by Anna-Brita Albertson (*letter*, 5/6 1964, in: *E 1 f:7*; *MBVA*, RA)

OF COURSE, the office of the Swedish Lutheran Mission was not happy with this development, and considered the decision by the AGM as a clear violation of the constitution of LCK, where it is said (in the section dealing with the relationship between LCK and SLM):

4. A case against a missionary shall be referred to the Mission Board in Stockholm for final decision in consultation with the Lutheran Church of Kenya.<sup>12</sup>

When there *really* is a case against a certain missionary (something which seems to have happened a few times in the history of ELCK), the proper procedure to follow is, consequently, this: Ex. Comm. informs the Mission Board employing the missionary, requesting that he or she will be recalled.

What Rev. Ohlsson got was, instead, a very rough and improper treatment, something which even is evident from the order of the decisions: First the AGM (which should not deal with such business at all; it was rather an Ex. Comm. matter) decided to send away a missionary – and then they decided what to accuse him for! As everyone who has met Rev. Ohlsson knows, the accusations are also very unfair.<sup>13</sup>

QUITE MANY PEOPLE understood that Rev. Ohlsson had been badly treated, and for the time being he continued to work as usual in LCK. But the Swedish Lutheran Mission was not willing to let Rev. Lundström continue as a missionary. The Board reacted swiftly for a very special reason. In a letter to one of the Board members of SLM, Lundström had made the following statement:

Remember, dear Brother, that I, as the Chairman [President] of the Church [LCK] must follow the Constitution [of LCK], then you can decide as you wish in Stockholm. If you want to sack me, please do it.<sup>14</sup>

The Board of Swedish Lutheran Mission understood this to mean: Through this letter Lundström showed that he had broken the promises given when he was blessed as a missionary, i.e. to follow the decisions taken by the SLM Board.<sup>15</sup> According to the SLM regulations, he had therefore dismissed himself as a missionary. His behaviour was the more serious, as the young Church had violated its own constitution, especially the agreement between LCK and SLM (Document B, 1:4; quoted above), while he, as the Church President, had not protested against that, but silently permitted it to happen.

Here it must be said, that Lundström, of course, had both obligations and rights as a Church President. But it seems that he did not understand that he – like a lot of other people before and after him – had a double loyalty: He had obligations both towards the *mission*, which had sent him, and towards the *Church*, which had elected him President.<sup>16</sup> This double position could not mean that he could hide behind his position as a Church President, if the *Church* violated its agreement with the *mission*.

When Lundström wrote to Sigurd Stark that it was “sad” that Ohlsson had to leave, and that he could not “remember” all the statements against Ohlsson, but that they would appear in the minutes, these statements do not sound very convincing.<sup>17</sup> In fact, Lundström was aware even before the AGM

<sup>12</sup> The 1963 LCK Constitution with By-laws. Document B (A 1:1; ELCKA, Itierio)

<sup>13</sup> When I made interviews with old ELCK workers in Dec. 2006 – Jan. 2007, almost everyone who had met Rev. Ohlsson spoke warmly about him. One old pastor (*interview* with Rev. Samwel Mogeni, Matongo, Jan. 2007), said, e.g., that Ohlsson did a good job with the school work and was a “superb leader” (*kiongozi*, Swa).

<sup>14</sup> Copy of letter from Lundström to Konrad Johansson, Nairobi, Febr. 25, 1964 (E 1 f:7; MBVA, RA)

<sup>15</sup> This can sound strange but is, in fact, quite

elementary. When someone is employed somewhere, it is expected that the employee follows instructions and decisions made by his or her superiors. Mission societies expect the same obedience as any secular organization!

<sup>16</sup> Just a trivial example: If an M.P. is the Board Chairman of a school, it means that he has *certain* duties as an M.P., and *other* duties as a Chairman. He can’t decide just to be an M.P. or a Chairman, when he is both! In the Lundström case, he had loyalties both to LCK and SLM. It was therefore impossible to state: I am only loyal to the

Church, but I am not loyal to the mission which has sent me to serve within LCK.

<sup>17</sup> Copy of letter from Lundström to Stark, Nairobi, March 4, 1964 (E 1 f:7; MBVA, RA)

<sup>18</sup> Copy of letter from Lundström to Konrad Johansson (member of the SLM Board), Nairobi, Febr. 25, 1964 (E 1 f:7; MBVA, RA). Lundström informed Johansson that two special issues had been brought to the AGM Agenda: 1. Breaking the relationship to SLM and presumably joining ELCT. 2. Sending home “some missionaries”.



that plans had been made up to send the Ohlsson family away from Kenya.<sup>18</sup>

The Swedish Lutheran Mission, from their side, stated that Lundström through the statement made in this letter to a Board member had left the service of the mission. They were willing to pay three months salary to him, and free travel home to Sweden, but from the July 1964 onwards they would not consider him as an SLM employee.

**THIS WAS THE SITUATION** when the Lutheran Church in Kenya had its second AGM in 1963, with Rev. Manfred Lundgren, from the Lutheran World Federation, present as a kind of mediator. It is written in the minutes:

Min. 31/64. *President*. A letter from the Mission Board in Stockholm has come in which it was told that Rev. M. Lundström has dismissed himself as missionary. In this letter was also an advice given that somebody else should be elected President of L.C.K. In the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1964 the opinion was expressed that no election of President should be done until delegates from the Mission Boards in Stockholm and Helsingfors and from L.W.F. had come to investigate the matter. There was a discussion on this and Rev. Lundgren advised that the President continue as nominal President but that the Vice President do the work until the delegation comes. It was decided that Rev. Lundström remain as nominal President until the matter is settled. The Vice President is to continue the work.

(Matters arising)

Min. 7/64. *Need of more missionaries*. It was reported that no answer has come to this yet.

...

Min. 11/64. *Missionaries to be returned*. There was a long discussion on this matter. After voting it was said that Rev. Ohlsson should continue until the Delegation comes. Many of the delegates were not satisfied with this and wanted a second voting and they suggested that he should leave the work and wait until the Delegation comes. It was however found that the majority was against

a second voting. Then there was a murmuring among the delegates and many of them left the room. When they had returned Rev. Ohlsson declared that he was ready to leave his work immediately if peace in the Church could be gained that way. When they were not satisfied with this Rev. Ohlsson said that he was ready to leave the country immediately.

As Rev. Ohlsson was the Education Secretary it was agreed upon that Mr. J-E Ekström takes over that work.

Min. 16/64. *The Church in Nairobi*. A sincere thanks was expressed to the Lutheran World Federation for the Shs 40000:- given for buying the church in Nairobi.<sup>19</sup>

The two Swedish families returned to Sweden quite rapidly after this: Rev. Ohlsson because he felt that to be the only possibility to restore peace to LCK, Rev. Lundström because his employment by SLM was running out. When they had returned home, both K G Ohlsson and Martin Lundström met the SLM Board, giving their opinion of the development.

Rev. Ohlsson worked in Sweden as a teacher for some years, until SLM sent him and his wife to Eritrea as missionaries, where they worked for a number of years. Rev. Lundström served as a pastor within the Church of Sweden for more than 20 years, before he died.

**THIS DEVELOPMENT ALSO** meant that LCK from July 1964 in reality had no President, only an acting one (Rev. Otete), and it was necessary to decide how to solve that issue.

A third AGM in 1964 convened on Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> at Itierio. Three important issues were discussed at that meeting: If the Santal Mission from Norway would be willing to assist LCK as a new mission partner – if a new President should be elected – if LCK should join ELCT in Tanganyika as a Kenyan diocese. The minutes report the decisions in the following way:

Matters arising:

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Min. 31/64. *President*. It was reported that Rev. KG Ohlsson left Kenya on 10<sup>th</sup> June and Rev. M. Lundström on 22<sup>nd</sup> July.

<sup>19</sup> AGM Minutes, May 28, 1964 (A I:1; ELCKA, Itierio)

Report about the correspondence between Ex.Com. and the Mission Board in Stockholm was given. The meeting declared that they did not want to go back to the old matters again.

Min. 38/64. *Santal Mission from Norway.* Two delegates from the Santal Mission have been here together with Rev. M. Lundgren from L.W.F. Discussions were held between them and representatives for L.C.K. in a meeting at Matongo on 5<sup>th</sup> September, 1964. As delegates they could not give any answer to the requests of L.C.K. but the answer will come from their Mission Board.

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Min. 47/64. *Election of President.* There was first a discussion about whether a President should be elected at this meeting but after voting it was found that the majority was in favour of election. The names suggested by the Ex. Com were presented and they were: Rev. J. Otete, Rev. G. Norrback, Rev. J. Michoro. After a prayer meeting Rev G. Norrback was elected President of L.C.K. for the period ending in February 1968. He got 34 votes, Rev. Otete got 6 and Rev. Michoro 3 votes.

Rev. J. Otete welcomed him as the President of L.C.K. and wished him the blessing of God in his work. The strength for the work will come from God...

The meeting expressed its appreciation of the work which Rev. J. Otete has done as acting President.

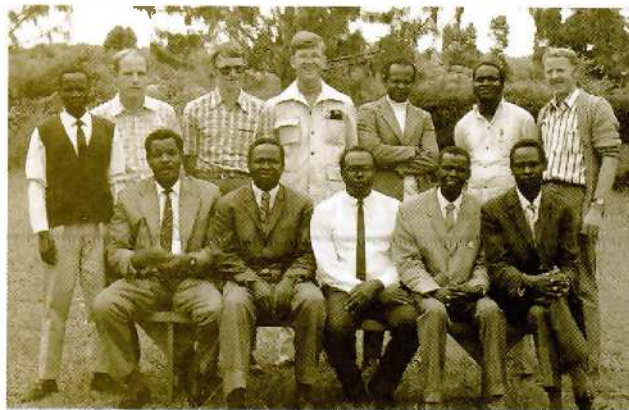
Rev. J. Otete will continue as Vice President.

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Min. 50/64. *Report about a speech held by the Secretary of E.L.C.T.*

It was reported that the Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanganyika, Mr. Joel Maeda, took part in a meeting at Matongo on 5<sup>th</sup> September, 1964 where he explained how E.L.C.T. had been formed and how it is working. It was pointed out that L.C.K. can take no steps towards joining E.L.C.T. unless the Mission Boards agree to it. L.C.K. is welcome to join E.L.C.T. but the application must come from L.C.K., no invitation will be given from E.L.C.T.

It was decided that Ex.Com. should gather more information about E.L.C.T. and find out whether it would be of any use for L.C.K. to join E.L.C.T. If they find [find] it would be useful the



Church administrators (early 1970's?)

Mission Boards must first be contacted before anything else can be done.

The meeting was closed by singing Song 69 in Tenzi za Rohoni and prayer.<sup>20</sup>

### c. *Why did this crisis happen?*

So far, we have followed the events just as they took place. We have seen *how* the events took place – but that does not explain *why*.

In order to understand the crisis, we need to use other sources than official minutes from AGM and similar events. Personally, I have tried to do it in two ways: through studying *letters* and making *interviews*.

The official letters in both Itierio and Stockholm give the same impression: The development of the work undertaken by Lundström, the other missionaries and the national Church workers, was *too successful* for him to remain as a leader.

When SLM started its work, the mission did not have any big resources. During the first five years, only five missionaries were working in Kenya, two of these to a large extent being home-makers (wives working at home).

But the work grew rapidly, and no Church can grow haphazardly, without recognizing its limits: how to use the personnel, resources in general, finances, buildings, etc. *The more a Church grows, the more important the administrative structure gets.*

The impression given through the letters is that Lundström “ran his own race”; in fact, he was not a “committee man”. He was very gifted in communication, and he was a born leader – but not a born administrator. Of course that created a lot of clashes, in meetings and out of meetings. He

<sup>20</sup> AGM Minutes, September 26, 1964 (A 1:1; ELCKA, Itierio); concerning Song 69, see note 1, above

also had problems in following the decisions which had been made, either by SLM or LCK.<sup>21</sup>

As long as Lundström was minding his own business, his work could continue for a while, because he every now and then moved into another area. But as the mission work grew, expanding into a Church body (1959) and later on into an independent Church (1963), the administration expanded. An administration can only function in a logical and strict way, not just *hivi, hivi* (Sw., “this way or that way”). Martin Lundström, however, was neither very logical nor very structured – he was social, friendly, emotional, restless. That means that *his own work, just by its own success, gradually made his leadership style obsolete*.<sup>22</sup>

The national workers reacted in different ways to his leadership: some were charmed by him, others drew back. But the other missionaries had to function in their work, they had to report back to the Mission Board – and they had to take care of the accounts.

The one expected to get special problems if the decision-making did not function was the Church Treasurer. He or she would be the one “remaining with the bill”, when decisions had been made without considering the finances. And who was, for many years, the Church Treasurer during these years? Rev. Ohlsson!

Many of the LCK problems in the early 1960's can be explained in a simple way: Rev. Lundström was no gifted administrator, while Rev. Ohlsson was a conscientious treasurer.

TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, the problems were solved, when the two missionary families left Kenya for good. One statement in the minutes is of special interest. It indicates that the Christians started to exhale in the end of 1964, when it was stated:

Report about the correspondence between Ex. Com. and the Mission Board in Stockholm was given. *The meeting declared that they did not want to go back to the old matters again.*<sup>23</sup>

Unfortunately it seems, however, that the basic problems never were solved. It can be questioned whether the Christians in Kenya and Sweden ever have understood what the 1964 conflict *really* was about, and no reconciliation has ever taken place, according to my knowledge.

The question can also be asked if the SLM Board working in the 1960's really understood how much the Board itself had contributed to the crisis. From a modern perspective it is surprising to see, to what extent the Board at home tried to supervise the work abroad – instead of building up a structure which really would function on the field. Furthermore, the duties assigned to Rev. Lundström were either vague or not respected by him. It seems that he, to a certain extent, did as he wished – an attitude which breaks down any organization and which SLM to a large extent permitted. In fact: if the Lundström family had not left Kenya in 1964, the other SLM and SLEAF missionaries would have left instead. They refused to work together with him any longer.<sup>24</sup>

The correspondence from the SLM missionaries also reveals a surprising but grave mistake by the SLM Board and Chairman: They allowed Karl Lundström (the father of Rev. Lundström), who was a member of the SLM Board, to be present when sensitive Kenya matters were discussed. This made it difficult for the Board to treat many of the problems connected with the Kenya work and the missionaries in a professional way.<sup>25</sup>

21 Especially Rev. Otete commented on this fact when I made interviews at Itierio and Matongo. According to Otete, it was not easy to co-operate with Lundström, and often he did not follow decisions which had been made. Instead he followed his own visions: “aliendelea peke yake” (interview with Rev. Otete, Itierio, Jan. 2007; PARI).

22 In the business world, it is not uncommon

that the person who starts up a business is not the best person to lead it in the long run, when it has grown. The *Ericsson* company in Sweden was started by L.M. Ericsson who left the company quite early. In a similar way, the creators of the famous *Apple/Mac* computers left the leadership of the company after just a few years.

23 Cf. note 20, above; italics by RI

24 All the 9 missionaries working in LCK

(excl. the Ohlsson family) requested their home Boards to act immediately, because they could not any longer continue to co-operate with Rev. Lundström (letter, 8/4/64, in: E 1 f:7; MBVA, RA). This shows how desperate the situation had become.

25 Letter by one of the missionaries (May 11, 1964; file E 1 f:7; MBVA, RA)





Rev. Michoro baptizing in Matongo Church

**FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE** a crisis like this is always tragic, even more so when no real reconciliation takes place.

But the fact still remains: Many mistakes were made by many persons – Kenyan Christians and missionaries alike. And whatever the faults and mistakes of Rev. Lundström, through his ministry he paved the way for the Gospel in Kenya as few other

Lutherans have done. ELCK has many reasons to remember many parts of his work with gratitude.

#### A new era – with new workers

It is no overstatement to say that a new era of LCK started in late 1964.

To a certain extent, that is a bit surprising. The most experienced missionaries had left, and the question was often asked: What will happen with the Lutheran Church of Kenya? But LCK came through the crisis and began to develop in many ways.

In the middle of 1964, LCK got its third national pastor: Rev. Otete and Rev. Omae had been serving for some time, while Rev. Jeftha Michoro was ordained in March 1964; like Omae he had only some shorter theological courses before his ordination.<sup>26</sup> The Church had a fourth pastor, Rev. Gustaf Norrback, who recently had come to Kenya. – Two other male missionaries who were not pastors, John-Erik Ekström and Sven Klemets, also served as parish leaders for some years, baptizing

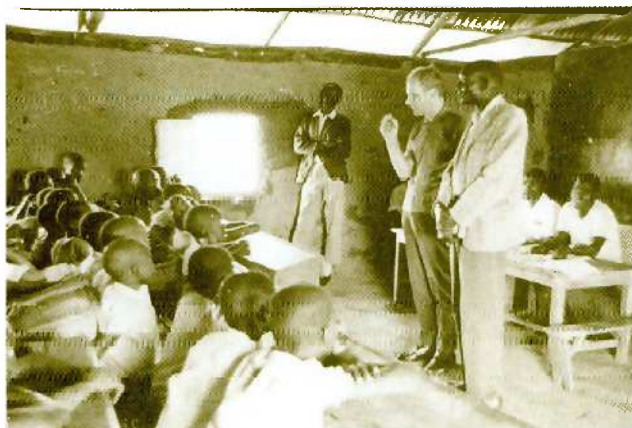


John-Erik Ekström with family after a service

<sup>26</sup> In an interesting article in *BVJ* (1965:34 ff, written by Josef Imberg) some of the details of his life are given: Rev. Michoro was born in 1920, and baptized on Nov. 12, 1938, in Kericho (Africa Inland Mission). In late 1941/1942 he was enrolled as a soldier. He served as a soldier mainly in Egypt, but he also experienced the famous

battle of Tobruk in Libya. While doing service in Egypt, he got permission to visit Palestine. He even walked by foot between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. According to him, Jordan was a bit bigger than the Sondu river... During his military service, he was influenced spiritually by some military chaplains, especially Anglicans from CMS.

– It is evident that his experiences during the war influenced his spiritual development, and he started to function as a kind of voluntary evangelist among his fellow soldiers. This prepared him for embracing the Lutheran doctrine in the early 1950's and for serving as an evangelist for some ten years before his ordination in 1964.



Sven Klemets, preaching



Service in a traditional church

and leading Holy Communion services. Interestingly enough, they had a totally different attitude to this assignment: Ekström wanted to be released from it, while Klemets apparently was very satisfied.<sup>27</sup> – As we have seen, this system disappeared in 1970.<sup>28</sup>

These pastors and missionaries were expected to take care of some 6000 Christians, spread over some 50-60 congregations, assisted by a number of evangelists, quite many of them with only a basic training.<sup>29</sup>

**THE DEVELOPMENT** in late 1964 caught everyone with surprise – and hardly anyone was more surprised than Gustaf Norrback. That he survived the chaos and could bring stability to LCK is almost a miracle. In fact, *it can be questioned where ELCK would be today without his contribution.*

While living in Finland he had worked as a teacher. In 1963 he and his wife Märta came to Kenya, expecting to build up a mission station in Maragoli. As we have seen, they were forced to leave the area after endless conflicts with Elam Musinde.<sup>30</sup>

After less than a year, SLEAF had experienced

a total failure in Maragoli-land, and the question was: What should the *mission* do in Kenya, and what about the *missionaries*? Should they stay or return home?

While the Mission Board in Finland struggled with these matters, the problem of the Klemets family were easily solved: Sven was immediately needed at Itierio as the manager of the station when K. G. Ohlsson left for Sweden. Consequently, the Klemets family only spent a few weeks at Wasundi before moving to Itierio.

But what should the Norrback family do? They moved to Matongo on Aug. 21, 1964; in fact, they *returned*, because they had initially stayed for half a year at Matongo before moving to Wasundi in April.<sup>31</sup> When they just had arrived at Matongo, having lived there for five weeks, and were making preparations for Swahili studies, Gustaf Norrback suddenly found himself, on Sept. 26, to be the President of a small African Church.

This happened 11 months after his arrival in the country and approximately one year after his ordination.<sup>32</sup>

27 John-Erik Ekström wrote to the Mission Board in Stockholm, requesting to be relieved from the duty to dispense the Sacraments (letter by J-E Ekström to Sigurd Stark, 27/3, 1962; letters by missionaries, MBVA, RA), while Klemets evidently was satisfied with the assignment to administer the Sacraments in the Luo area (Othoro and Nyagowa which by this time included Mititi, Samanga, Andiwo); that is seen in an article by him in *Hemåt*, 1965:84 ff.

28 See chapter 10, esp. note 17

29 Concerning these figures, see Appendix 6, below

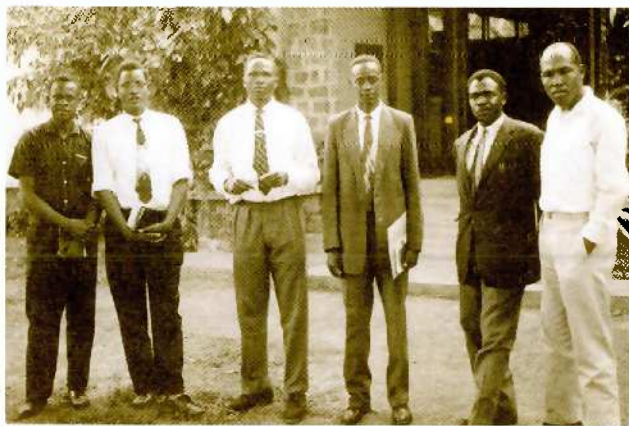
30 See previous chapter with references

31 They lived at Wasundi for only four months; Norrback, *Kenyamissionen* 1963–1973, p. 103, 118

32 The Norrback family came to Kenya on Oct. 28, 1963 (Norrback, *Kenyamissionen* 1963–1973, p. 85). Gustaf Norrback was ordained as a missionary pastor before

coming to Kenya (see Lounela, *Mission and Development*, p. 50, n. 147; the picture from the missionary blessing on Oct. 20, 1963, also shows that he was ordained as a pastor in the Church of Finland, *Evangeliföreningen* 1873–1973, p. 114) – but it is very difficult from the SLEAF documents to find out the exact date of his ordination!





Graduation of Francis Nyamwaro at Makumira, together with other Kenyan students



Ordination of Francis Nyamwaro Onderi



**REV. NORRBACK** became the President of LCK, when the Church was in the middle of a crisis, but for several reasons, many things would turn to the better during the next few years.

To start with, within a few years not less than five pastors were ordained, all of them graduates after studies in Tanzania.

In December 1964, Rev. Norrback ordained Francis Nyamwaro. He had undertaken studies at Matongo Bible School and was a graduate from Makumira, Tanzania. Before his ordination he had served the Church for some years, and after his ordination he has served the Church in a number of capacities – as parish pastor, Vice President/ Vice Chairman, Chairman, and, finally, as the first Bishop of LCK. For 14 years, between 1988 and 2002, he was the leader of ELCK.

Two years later, in 1966, Nicholas Oenga, was ordained at Matongo; he, also, had studied at

Matongo Bible School and then graduated from Makumira. He has later served ELCK in different capacities – parish pastor, city worker, General Secretary, Vice President – but he has also served Christianity in Kenya in general. For many years he worked in ecumenical organizations, e.g. World Vision.<sup>33</sup>

**ANOTHER THREE PASTORS** were ordained in 1968, shortly after the handing over from Norrback to James Otete as the President of LCK.

It is very clear, that LCK from 1964 onwards, got more and more trained pastors. The theological competence was gradually increasing and the

<sup>33</sup> Information from Rev. Nicholas Oenga Arosi (interview with N.O.A., Matongo, March 2007; PARI)





Ordination of Nicholas Oenga

Bible School students together with their teachers, Josef Imberg (left) and Gustaf Norrback (right)



Church became more and more aware of the importance of its Lutheran identity.

AS EVERYONE KNOWS, who has met him, the Gospel and the Lutheran heritage were very important to Gustaf Norrback. In fact, he stressed the Gospel so much that he has been called “hyper-evangelical”,<sup>34</sup> and a very important issue for him as a Church President was the Lutheran identity.

But in the theological field, another missionary, who came to Kenya in March 1965, was even more important. As we have noted before,<sup>35</sup> Rev. Josef Imberg was the first trained theologian sent out to Kenya by one of the two supporting mission bodies.<sup>36</sup> The fact that he was placed at the Matongo Bible School, where he came to serve for almost six years, was very important. His theological competence, combined with his experience from other African countries and his pedagogical skill, has been very important in influencing the theological identity of LCK/ELCK.<sup>37</sup>

In this first year, 1965–66, all the old evangelists were recalled to Matongo, where they had a refresher course. In fact, even two of the pastors were also sent there as students, Rev. Omae and Rev. Michoro. Consequently, a kind of common theological foundation was laid for the young Church. The fact that when Imberg left in 1971, all evangelists and pastors (except pastors only trained at Makumira in Tanzania) had studied for him, meant that his theological interpretation came to influence the theological stand of LCK for many years, to a certain extent even up to today.

<sup>34</sup> Rev. Olak made a very interesting statement at the ELCK History seminar concerning the first SLEAF missionaries in Kenya: According to him, Rev. Norrback was almost hyper-evangelical in his theological stand, while Sven Klemets, at least initially, was more legalistic (*ELCK History seminar*, MLTC, March 2007).

<sup>35</sup> Chapter 10, note 12

<sup>36</sup> Rev. Oenga commented in an interview that it was evident to him and many others, that SLM was a mission organization led by laymen. The development was influenced by the fact that none of the first missionaries was a theologian (*interview with N.O.A., Matongo, March 2007; PARI*).

<sup>37</sup> Josef Imberg, who was ordained in Sweden in 1942, served many years as a missionary in Tanganyika, South Africa and South Rhodesia (within Church of Sweden Mission, 1944–56), and then in Kenya 1965–1971 (Hylander, *Biografisk matrikel över Svenska Kyrkans Prästerskap*, p. 622)



Josef Imberg, teaching at Matongo Bible School



Representatives from the Norwegian Santal Mission and Lutheran World Federation visiting Othoro in Sept. 1964

In the theological field he stressed, especially, the infallibility of the Scripture, and having the Lutheran confessions as a solid foundation for all preaching and teaching. He also influenced, as we have seen, the liturgical development of LCK: Initially the Church had a rather vague liturgical model, more like “spiritual meetings”, but from now on LCK began to follow the structure which traditionally is found both in Europe and a number of African countries, e.g. Tanzania.<sup>38</sup>

His literary production – both in Swahili and English – has influenced several generations of theologians within ELCK.<sup>39</sup>

#### The work – consolidation and expansion

As we have seen, while Rev. Lundström still was the President, he investigated whether other mission societies could join the Lutheran work in Kenya.<sup>40</sup> The most serious contacts were taken with the Norwegian *Santal Mission*, who even sent a high

<sup>38</sup> An interesting question is: What hymn book was used in connection with the opening of the AGM? For several years (1962-65) *Tenzi za Rohoni* was used; from 1968 onwards it seems that the Lutheran *Nyimbo za Kikristo* began to be utilized (A I:1; ELCKA, Itierio).

<sup>39</sup> During his years at MBS he gradually produced most of the text books himself. All were in duplicated form. Many of them have later been reprinted, some even as books: *Imani ya Kikristo*, 1965 (dogmat-

ics); *Kitabu cha Maombi*, 1965 (a short prayer book); *Kiongozi kwa Katekisimo Ndogo*, 1966 (catechetics); *Mashauri Mema machache kwa Wainjilisti*, 1966 (instruction for evangelists); *Prayer Book*, 1967; *Maandalio kwa masomo ya Mwaka wa Kanisa*, 1967 (sermon preparations for the gospel readings); *Historia ya Kanisa*, 1968 (a Church History); *Kiongozi kwa Sunday-School*, 1969 (a handbook for Sunday school teachers); *Maandalio juu ya Nyaraka zote za Mwaka wa Kanisa*,

1969 (sermon preparations for the epistle readings of the Church year); *Maelezo juu ya Injili ya Marko*, 1970 (a commentary on the book of Mark); *Vitabu vya Biblia*, 1970 (a reference book on the books in the Bible); *Utunzaji wa Kiroho*, 1971 (on spiritual counselling). This information is taken from a list by Josef Imberg, *Skrifter på svenska, engelska och swahili*, made in 1995-1997; the list and all books are found in my private library, PARI.

<sup>40</sup> See chapter 11



ranking delegation to Kenya. After their return to Norway, their Board discussed whether to join the work in Kenya or not.

Their final response turned out to be negative which is no surprise – they happened to come to Kenya in the middle of the crisis in 1964! – but there are three elements in the discussions, which are of interest even today:

- The contents in general in a Memo prepared by the Acting President, Rev. Otete, early in Sept. 1964
- The description by Rev. Otete of the situation within LCK (also in the Memo)<sup>41</sup>
- The response given by the Santal Mission.

The Santal Mission Memo was presented to the two Santal Mission representatives (Mr. A. Gladstad and Rev. P. Kjolberg) and Rev. M. Lundgren from L.W.F. Present was also Mr. Joel Maeda from ELCT in Tanzania.<sup>42</sup>

Initially, Rev. Otete made two interesting statements. According to him, LCK was in the process of joining ELCT:

Brother J. Maeda will explain the stages of progress of the Federation of the Lutheran Churches in Tanganyika which L.C.K. needs to hear before joining it shortly.<sup>43</sup>

This statement can really be questioned: Different LCK and ELCT delegations discussed such a merger, but it is hardly correct that any such *agreement* really had been made.<sup>44</sup> Why did Rev. Otete then make such a statement to the Norwegians? Did he state it a *fact*, because he wanted it to *take place*? It is, however, clear, that both he and Rev. Lundström, who now was living in Sweden, actively wanted LCK to join ELCT as a Kenyan diocese.<sup>45</sup>

Otete also described why LCK wanted the Santal Mission to join the work in Kenya. His statement here is very programmatic; in fact it summarizes the attitude which has guided ELCK in its external relations for many years:

Brothers, before starting the discussion L.C.K. is making [it] clear that there are open gates for spreading the gospel in this country (Kenya). Kenya being a big country with selfgovernment, has given great opportunity to proclaim the gospel everywhere and in every department. L.C.K. as a young Church of 16 years only has done very little. As its income [is] very low and it has very few servants this cannot spread enough in this country. This is the reason why this church has decided to ask different Lutheran Societies from other countries to come that we help each other to do this great service in unity.<sup>46</sup>

Otete then continued by describing the situation, and certain areas where LCK wanted to get help from the Norwegians. He wanted external help especially in the following areas

- to serve in the Luo area, a work which was expanding
- to assist in the Bible School, which lacked teachers
- to assist in the youth work; an increasing number of LCK Christians were studying in Secondary Schools
- to join the Sunday school work: More than 4000 children attended the LCK Sunday schools
- to join the work in Secondary schools; LCK needed Christian teachers in its Secondary schools – one had been running for some time (Itierio), and one was expected to be start within a short time (Matongo)

41 Such reports should not be underestimated. From a historical point of view they are often very important, because they function as a kind of “snapshot” of the situation. After just five or ten years, they tend to become very interesting – and even more so, now when 44 years have passed.

42 This *Santal Mission Memo* is officially called “The Main points to be discussed between the Santal Mission Delegates and the Lutheran Church of Kenya” (it is found

in the folder *E II:1, ELCKA, Itierio*)

43 *Ib.*, p. 1

44 The AGM minutes from Sept. 26, Min. 50/64 (cf. note 20, above) state an intention, not a fact!

45 See correspondence in Itierio (file *E II:1; ELCKA, Itierio*), e.g. letter from J O Nchogu to M Lundström, 23/12 1964, where Otete (in Swahili) gives a more correct interpretation of the decision in September 1964: “Kujiuunga na E.L.C.T.

Katika sinodi iliyopita L.C.K. ilipitisha kwamba *itatafuta kujiunga...*” – italics by R.I.

46 The *Santal Mission Memo* (in: *E II:1, ELCKA, Itierio*). Cf. the interesting analysis of a similar document in Lounela, *Mission and Development*, p. 43





Matongo Secondary school



Maj-Len Åbonde (Onditi) at work, she was the first SLEAF missionary working as a nurse

- to work in *Nairobi*, where some 50 people attended the regular services in the church, and in *Mombasa*, where there were at least 500 Lutheran Christians

- more pastors; many parishes were led by evangelists instead of by pastors

**FURTHERMORE, LCK** wanted the assistance of the Santal Mission in some specialized areas: Getting a home for orphans – building new Parish buildings – expanding the medical work – training pastors, etc.

Finally, Rev. Otete returned to the issue of a federation between LCK and ELCT, but now making a mixture of statements:

L.C.K. will consider to join with the Lutheran Brothers in Tanganyika...



School children



The building up of Atemo also meant that a bridge had to be built, 1967

In some ways L.C.K. has already joined because we share some work with E.L.C.T... Therefore L.C.K. is informing you missionaries and Mission Societies not to bring any opposition against this Federation which will take place very soon. The church itself has decided a[l]ready.<sup>47</sup>

The Norwegians received the information and participated in the talks. After returning home to Norway, the issue was discussed in their Board. It seems that they also had some contacts with the

<sup>47</sup> Cf. note 42, above

SLM Board in Stockholm.<sup>48</sup> Finally they made the decision not to join the work in Kenya, which hardly is surprising given the circumstances.

Of special interest to us here is the explanation which the Santal Mission Board gave to LCK when informing of the fact that the Norwegians had decided not to join the work in Kenya. In a letter which was read to the Annual General Meeting of LCK in Febr. 1965, the Santal mission warned the Church not to seek expansion whatever the cost. In the long run, that would be a dangerous attitude:

Min. 4/65. *Minutes...*

Matters arising...

Min. 38/64. *Santal Mission from Norway.* It was reported that the answer from the Santal Mission has come. They are not able to start work in Kenya now. They also warned LCK not to expand the work too much and not to think too much of what looks big.<sup>49</sup>

When that has been said, let us finally study some figures related to the development and expansion of LCK:

Year	Ev.s	N/Past.	Miss.	B/C	X-tians	C/Pr.pl.	Par. <sup>50</sup>
1964	–	4	10?	–	–	–	–
1965	38	4	13	–	6000	–	–
1966	42	5	13?	–	–	61	8
1967	43	8	14	–	–	59	8
1968	45	9	14	–	8000	65	9

The number of evangelists did not increase, but rather the quality of their training; the number of national pastors, however, was doubled in a few years. Despite the crisis in 1964, the number of missionaries also increased, slowly. The number of congregations and preaching places was rather stable. The big expansion was rather *internal* – in only some three years (from 1965 to 1968), the number of Christians increased with appr. 33 %, from 6.000 to 8.000.

IN THE REPORT TO the AGM in early 1966, Rev. Norrback summarized the development and mentioned some important events taking place the previous year, 1965. Some things he mentioned were:<sup>51</sup>

- The Bible School was re-opened in April 1965 and plans were made for extending the premises
- New churches had been built in Othoro and Keumbu, while other building projects were taking place in Nyagowa, Gotchaki and Bobembe
- The work in Nairobi and Mombasa continued; LCK had Ev. Francis Matwere working in Nairobi,

while two pastors from Tanzania (Rev. Jesse Stefano, Rev. Jengo) assisted LCK in the city work. The work in these two cities was led by a special committee, *Board of Directors for Nairobi and Mombasa work*, where the LCK President was chairman

- Plans were made up for a Church centre in Nairobi

- The two clinics, at Itierio and Matongo, were functioning well, but plans were made for an extension

AT THIS TIME, LCK had also started to expand the school work. The Secondary school at Itierio started in 1963, and a second one at Matongo in 1965.

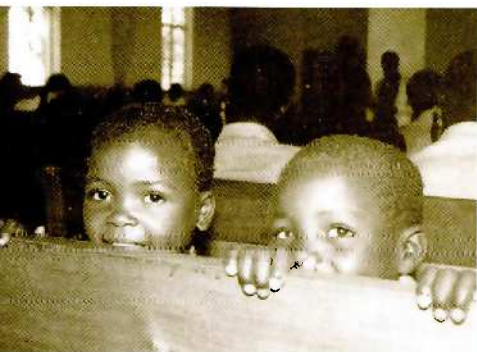
<sup>48</sup> Otete commented on this fact in his letter to Lundström (cf. note 45, above)

<sup>49</sup> AGM minutes, 27<sup>th</sup> Febr. 1965 (case A I:1; ELCKA, Itierio).

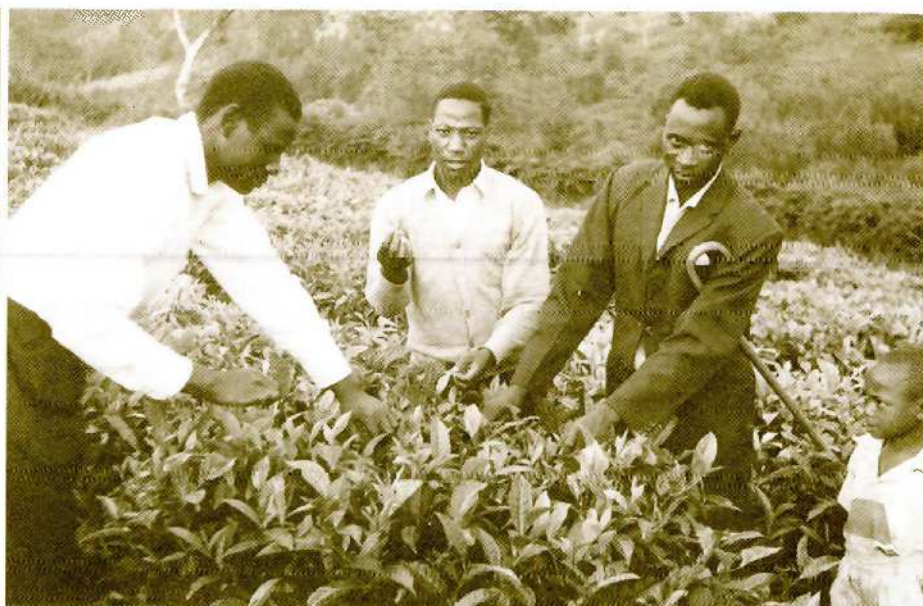
<sup>50</sup> The abbreviations list the numbers, in the following order, of: Evangelists – National Pastors – Missionaries – Baptized (or Confirmed if baptized in another Church) – Christians – Congregations/Preaching places – Parishes.

<sup>51</sup> Information from the LCK President, given at the AGM 1966 (quoted from BVMBV 1965: 47 ff)





Divided attention



A young John Momanyi Kururia (one of the first students at Itierio Secondary School), working in the tea fields



Ordination of three pastors, 1968



Anna-Brita Albertson, switched from the Itierio clinic to working full time in the literary work

Something which really is surprising, also from a more modern perspective, is how much LCK (and before that SLM) stressed education for girls. Itierio Secondary School was a mixed school – and half of the students were, surprisingly enough, girls.<sup>52</sup>

It would be very interesting to study the implications – concerning education, general development in the country, but also concerning the evangelistic work and growth of ELCK – of the fact that so many girls so early went to Lutheran schools.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> In 1965 Itierio Secondary School had 100 students, among whom 49 were girls (BVMBV 1965:52 ff)

<sup>53</sup> One consequence of such a high number

of girls must be that many of the girls came from outside of the Itierio community. Did that influence the evangelistic work? We have previously noted that as early as in

1961, some girl students wanted to translate Luther's Small Catechism to Maragoli! (chapter 11, n. 50, above)





#### **IV. THE FERTILE SOIL**

Some elements  
in the recent development,  
1968–2008

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

COL. 4:2 F, NIV

*The country here is very fertile, almost beyond imagination.*

AXEL B. SVENSSON, KISII, FEBR. 28, 1939, WHEN DESCRIBING THE KISII AREA<sup>1</sup>

## 14. Important elements in the recent development of ELCK

WHEN AXEL B. SVENSSON wrote home to Sweden on Febr. 28, 1939, the very same day that God had opened the doors for SLM to start with mission work in Nyanza, he almost lacked words when trying to describe the Kisii area. As we have just seen above, he considered the area to be “fertile, almost beyond imagination”.

Of course he was thinking of the soil, as anyone would say coming from Sweden to Kisii-land. But in a deeper sense we can also interpret his words spiritually.

The “spiritual” soil in Nyanza turned out to be very fertile, and as we have seen above, the work expanded rapidly in many ways: Many persons were baptized, and within just a few years other tribes started to be reached – the work of Swedish Lutheran Mission expanded from the Kisii area to groups of Luo, Kipsigis, Maragoli. And later on, the ELCK work has spread to the Maasai, Pokot, Borana, Digo... and a number of other tribes.

As we also have seen, it only took 11 years before the SLM work was transformed into a small *Church*, and after only four more years the Church became independent as the *Lutheran Church of Kenya*.

In the 45 years which have gone since independence in 1963, the Church has expanded with some 1600%, from roughly 6.000 to appr. 100.000 members. The church has got more than 100 pastors, several hundred congregations, four bishops, each in his diocese... and there are several hundred schools connected with ELCK.<sup>2</sup>

WE HAVE FOLLOWED the development up to 1968 – and there we will leave it for now. When I initially planned my work, I intended to follow the development up to the 1980's or even 1990's, but gradually I came to realize that it would be proper to draw a line at the year 1968.

There are several reasons behind this decision of mine

- The sources which I have been using (in Sweden and Kenya) have been very rich up to appr. 1968, but from that year onwards, the sources have started to dwindle. I began to realize that I had a very clear picture of the development up to 1968, but not after that year. In fact, I saw that I was encountering a number of gaps in the archives which I had access to.<sup>3</sup>

- In 1969 and 1970 two new mission societies

1 Private letter from Axel B. Svensson to Nils Nilsson, Nosabyholm, Sweden: “... it is still true, that if our Lord God has decided to open [a door], then no one can close it... Now it seems to me to be a big shame to doubt the final outcome through the English authorities. But – I am so weak in my faith. / The country here is very fertile, almost beyond imagination... It is very important for the forthcoming develop-

ment that we have received a request from natives in the three chiefdoms, because in that way the development is almost ascertained.” (Letter belonging to Mrs. Eva Ragnarsson [Kristianstad, Sweden] dated “Kisii boma”, Febr. 28, 1939; copy in PARI)

2 For this information, see the *Kalenda* of ELCK

3 The research which Antti Kuokannen is

undertaking in Finland will “close” many of these gaps, when he is analysing the financial development of ELCK and tracing the old minutes of the AGM and Ex. Comm. minutes of the Church



In the early 1970's, the work among women began to expand. These two pictures show work in progress

joined the LCK work, the *World Mission Prayer League*, the *Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland*. In order to be fair both to LCK and these mission societies, it would be necessary to change my perspective and get access to their archives. But for practical reasons and because of lack of time it has not been possible for me to undertake such investigations.

- It is also by this time, appr. 1970, that the work of the Church begins to expand and get diversified. The women's work started by this time, the literary work began to expand, etc., and gradually a number of departments came into existence. Once more, it means that the perspective which I have been using in this book needs to be modified.

- I also noticed that the closer we come to the modern era, the more sensitive a number of issues become. And it is important for the Church historian to be as impartial as possible; it is important to draw a clear line between *historical research* and *Church politics*. I felt it is not yet time to make a full scale analysis of this later development.

I have therefore decided to concentrate on the earlier development, and I have tried in a special way to explain many of the traits in the development which have to do with the Nordic background of LCK. For the Lutheran Christians in Kenya today, some elements in the development of LCK are

quite difficult to understand and explain if you lack a basic knowledge of the culture and religious history of Northern Europe.

As someone who has lived in both cultures – Kenya and Sweden – and moved between them for many years, I have seen it as a special challenge to try to bridge the culture gap. In this book I have therefore tried

- to explain what brought SLM to Kenya
- to describe the pre-understanding (*Vorverständnis*, Germ.), especially in the theological field, which influenced SLM and which many missionaries, often unknowingly, brought with them into the mission work
- to discern how the Kenyan Christians received this teaching
- and, especially – and that is really a thrilling part of the story – to show how the Kenyan Lutherans transformed this teaching and “kenyanized” it

**BEFORE LEAVING** the reader, I will, however, now try to indicate certain areas which I have met in my research and which, I believe, will be important or at least interesting in future research. I will especially try to indicate areas where there is, according to my understanding, an important connection between the *early development* and the *present situation* within ELCK.



## Leadership issues

### Elections

Of course leadership issues have a fundamental importance in any organization. The AGM minutes disclose how elections and re-elections have taken place. The fact that the election in 1968, when Rev. Norrback handed over to Rev. Otete, was peaceful is not very surprising – Rev. Norrback was eager to hand over the leadership of LCK to a national pastor. But still, it seems to have been a very peaceful event.

A very interesting election took place in 1980: That year Rev. Momanyi received just a few more votes than Rev. Otete,<sup>4</sup> who stepped down as the leader of ELCK and returned to his duties as a parish pastor until his retirement more than 10 years later. His behaviour by that time made a great impression on many. In fact, this peaceful transition from the most senior pastor in the Church to one of the youngest, is – in my opinion – one of the reasons for the stability of ELCK which we find in the 1980's.

We can also note that the delegates of the highest decision making body in ELCK, the AGM, really have been using their power when electing the leaders of the Church. The fact that somebody had been a leader for some time didn't mean that he could expect or presume his re-election. The early

elections show that ELCK has a long tradition of laymen being actively involved in the elections of the Church leaders.

There are, however, other occasions in the history of ECLK when elections have caused tension in different ways. Discussing those events will be something for posterity to deal with.<sup>5</sup>

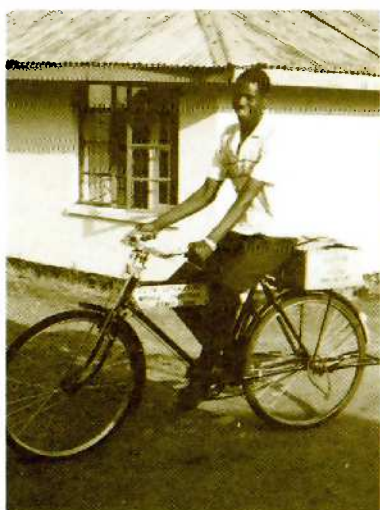
### The constitution

The constitutional issues are always important – in all Churches. The reason is that a constitution is a mixture of *structure*, *leadership* and *theology*.

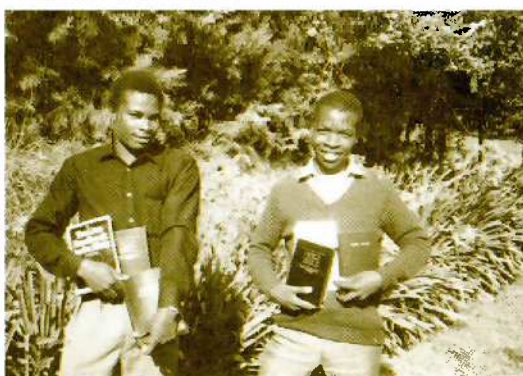
Personally, I think it is interesting that ELCK up to today, basically, has been using a constitution which was written in 1963. Evidently the “constitutional fathers” did a good work when the constitution now has been functioning for some 45 years.

But every now and then a Church needs to review its constitution. In some cases it is the *structure* which needs to be changed, in other cases the changes have to do with a *theological development*.

The expansion of the ELCK has forced the Church to make a number of changes which have made the original constitution becoming more and more of a patchwork: Districts and dioceses have been added, the Church President became “Chairman” in 1978, and in 1996 the Chairman became “Bishop”.



Literary work means that book sellers are needed.  
Here some of the workers



<sup>4</sup> This election appears in App. 1, below

<sup>5</sup> Erling Lundeby has dealt with some of those problems in a couple of papers, *Structural tensions and new strategies*, *Trends in the*

*Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya in the period 1990-2005*, in: *Norsk Tidsskrift for Misjonsvetenskap*, 2007, 61 (n. 4), and *Vekst og modning – tilbakeslag og kriser*.

*Luthersk kirkeliv i Kenya 1990-2005*, in: *Budskap* 2006, p. 30-47

When such changes occur, we are not only talking of *structure* – we are also talking *theology*. When ELCK got its first Bishop in 1996, the change was not surprising from a Kenyan perspective – although the SLM delegates who came to Itierio in 1939 would have been surprised! Introducing the office of a Bishop had been “in the air” for many years.<sup>6</sup>

There is, however, reason to remember that introducing the office of a Bishop is not only the matter of changing the title of a certain Church official – it has also got important *theological implications*.

Such issues have been studied and discussed over the years – at MLTC, in Pastors’ conferences – without creating any total consensus in ELCK. The radical changes (when compared with the previous constitution) which are found in the *Proposed Constitution. First Draft. February, 2007* prove that many issues were not settled when the office of a Bishop was introduced in 1996 – and still, after more than 10 years, it seems that there is no full consensus.<sup>7</sup>

Other changes, however, may seem to be far-reaching, but are much less controversial, e.g. when the district structure was introduced in the early 1970’s, and when the name of the Church was changed, from the *Lutheran Church of Kenya* to the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya*.<sup>8</sup>

### *The administration*

As we see in Appendix 1, an important step was taken in the late 1960’s, when the office of a Gen. Secr. was introduced.

The introduction of that office is, in my opinion, an indication that it took LCK only half a dozen of years to expand so much that the “costume” of the 1963 constitution was getting too small. But it is also an indication of the fact that LCK gradually was discarding the old structure, which the SLM missionaries had brought to Kenya.

Having an ordained Church President and a General Secretary as leaders of the Church is something quite different from the system with untrained lay preachers which seems to have been the ideal of the SLM leader, Axel B. Svensson.

It must, however, be noted that the Gen. Secr. almost always has been elected,<sup>9</sup> and that fact can be interpreted in two ways:

- in this way the Gen. Secr. has had his own “power” position, and in many cases he has been able to “balance” the power of the President / Chairman

- on the other hand, the *administrative competence* of an elected Gen. Secr. can be good – or less so; that is the reason why General Secretaries often are *appointed*, not *elected*, because they are needed to create an efficient administration

### **Work and theology**

#### *Unity – or division?*

Two other important structural changes concerning the work have, to a large extent, influenced the development of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya.

One change was *creating deaneries* in the 1990’s; it was a structural decision which almost automatically led to the creation of different *dioceses* within ELCK. *That decision might, in the long run, be almost as important as when the office of a bishop was introduced.*

Why?

The answer is very simple: Up to appr. 2000, the ELCK was really a single unity: it was a *Church*, but structurally it also *functioned as one single diocese*.

When ELCK was divided into several dioceses, it means – by necessity – that the development of the Church will differ between the dioceses. Some dioceses might grow rapidly (concerning members, finances, number of pastors), others might grow less or even backslide. In the long run, having

6 Cf. the interesting contribution by Rev. Oteke, “The constitution of ELCK”, in the official ELCK History, *ELCK 1963-1998*, p. [18 ff]; the discussion concerning having a Bishop in ELCK is found on p. [22]

7 *Proposed Constitution. First Draft. February, 2007*

8 Cf. the AGM minutes of 1978: Min. 17/78 Kuthibitisha sehemu za Katiba: A. Jina la Kanisa. / Kwa mara ya pili jina la

Kanisa lilisomwa kuwa: Kanisa la Kiinjili la Kilutheri katika Kenya. (AGM minutes, 1-2/3/78, A 1:3; *ELCKA*, Itierio).

9 Concerning this, cf. App. 1, below

different dioceses will influence the development but also the “power balance”, e.g. votes in AGM, in the Church and even put a strain on the unity of the Church.

The system of having a number of bishops leading the Church will make it *imperative for the Bishops to stress the unity of the Church* – otherwise, ELCK might find itself divided up and fragmentized.<sup>10</sup>

But the basic rule needs to be remembered: Good leadership by the Bishop will make the diocese stronger, while weak leadership might influence the development of the diocese in a negative way.

Another aspect which needs to be remembered: Having different dioceses means that the *Ex. Comm.*, which up to now has been a very powerful body within ELCK, presumably *will lose much of its power*, getting weaker: Many decisions will now be taken on a diocesan level. Exactly what that will mean, no one can tell, beforehand.

**THIS UNITY PROBLEM IS**, however, no new issue to ELCK. In fact, the Church faced this problem at a very early stage, some 40 years ago. I am talking of the system with *areas of concentration*, i.e. different mission societies concentrating their work (and often very substantial financial contributions) to certain areas of ELCK.

This idea of “areas of concentration” began to appear in the later part of the 1960’s. SLM was rather hesitant to the idea, while SLEAF pushed this idea strongly, to a large extent with the blessing of the leaders of ELCK.

Even as a teenager I could notice the tension which this issue brought among the missionaries. I will not analyse that development here (then we would pass the time line of 1968!), but it still needs to be mentioned. I am glad to notice that Dr. Lounela has recognized the importance of this issue, and I am certain that it will be discussed more in the future.<sup>11</sup>

As Lounela also has noticed, the system with “areas of concentration” had many financial and even tribal implications. To discern to what extent they have been beneficial to ELCK, and what the negative implications are, is out of the limits of this book.

#### Contribution by the mission societies

Many important decisions were taken under the leadership of Rev. James Otete Nchogu (ELCK President / Chairman) 1968–80. Let us now give a couple of examples, starting with his attitude towards co-operating missions.

In ch. 13 we saw that Otete, in 1964, as acting President of LCK wanted to accomplish two things, as it seems influenced by Rev. Lundström:

- he wanted LCK to enter ELCT as a kind of Kenya diocese
- he wanted the Norwegian Santal Mission to join the Lutheran work in Kenya

When he, some years later, became President of LCK he seems to have lost his interest in creating a merger with ELCT. Instead, he worked actively to develop LCK, and one instrument was to get new mission societies to Kenya – and in that area he was, in fact, very successful. In just eight years he managed to bring three mission organizations to Kenya as supporting mission societies:<sup>12</sup>

- *World Mission Prayer League*, 1969
- *Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland*, the sister organization of SLEAF, 1970
- *Norwegian Lutheran Mission*, 1977

When this has been said, it is necessary, here, to recognize four important facts:

- These mission societies differ in their *background* (one being basically American, two being North European) – in their *historical background* – in certain *theological areas* (e.g. in their attitude towards the Lutheran Church they are connected

<sup>10</sup> The development of the Anglican Church in Kenya, getting more and more small dioceses, often divided along tribal lines, indicates the problems which ELCK needs to evade

<sup>11</sup> Jaakko Lounela, *Mission and Development*, p. 52 ff; he has noticed, quite correctly, that especially one SLM missionary reacted strongly against this idea, viz. my father, Josef Imberg. The correspondence

in the SLM Archives proves how sensitive this issue was, even creating tension between SLM and SLEAF.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *ELCK 1963–1998*, p. [40 ff, 44 ff, 48 ff]



with, in their attitude towards the ordained ministry and the lay ministry) – in their structure. The differences are numerous.

- When they entered the work in Kenya, they came with different kinds of experience. WMPL and NLM had a rich experience from several other countries, but to LEAF, just like it was to SLEAF, Kenya was the second mission field, ever.

- The structure which ELCK got through this co-operation with these mission societies, in the 1970's, is the one which has been functioning up to quite recently, for almost 30 years

- The negotiations with especially NLM were quite tough – in this way it was possible, even if there were certain clear differences between LCK and the Norwegians in several theological areas, to create a functional compromise. The influence of James Otete in these negotiations was clear. He was interested in having NLM assisting the Church in different areas, but he also clearly pointed out that ELCK was writing the rules. Out of this agreement came a respect and stability which seems to have been very beneficial, both for NLM and the Kenyan Church.<sup>13</sup>

BY THE WAY, we can also note that the work which started in West Pokot in 1977 means that the Lutherans in Kenya have been able to benefit from the work done by the Anglicans (BCMS) many years ago – a work which SLM was invited to join many years back, in the 1930's!<sup>14</sup> Instead of having Swedish missionaries working there, the Norwegians came – some 40 years later. This is one area where ELCK has been expanding rapidly, and it is a very illuminating example of how God is working in his Church.

One of the leading theologians in ELCK today,

Rev. Dr. Joseph Ochola, has expressed the situation in this way:

[The] ELCK Theological development cannot be viewed apart from the so-called *our traditional mission organizations*: out of which this Church was born and brought up. Our traditional mission organizations: SLM, NLM, LEAF, LEAF and WMPL come from different Nordic countries and USA. That means the mission organizations have come from a total[ly] different cultural background which knowingly or unknowingly shape their way of perceiving the world around them different from the context into which they were to communicate the Gospel. In this regard, talking about ELCK theology, implicitly, means talking about how our mission organizations presented the God's Word to our people and how the people responded...

Being a student at MLTC, I have been taught by all our missionaries from all our traditional mission organizations. I could see and feel their differences both in class and outside class.<sup>15</sup>

### Matongo Lutheran Theological College

Rev. Otete was also very influential in the early efforts to transform Matongo Bible School into a full scale theological college, something which happened in 1978 when Matongo Lutheran Theological College came into existence.<sup>16</sup>

Many reasons can be given for the creation of MLTC. Some reasons which were mentioned during the *ELCK History seminar in March 2007* were:<sup>17</sup>

- When Kenyan students studied at Makumira, LCK was in general permitted only to send one or two candidates – but ELCK wanted to train more pastors

- Political complications between Kenya and Tanzania sometimes made travelling difficult – when the

<sup>13</sup> Some interesting perspectives on this theological "culture clash" between ELCK and NLM, and how it was solved, are found in a study paper, written by Abdub Godana, dealing with the Marsabit district within ELCK: *History of ELCK work in Marsabit*, 1992

<sup>14</sup> See ch. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Rev. Dr. Joseph Ochola *Written statement (Theological Development in ELCK, ELCK History Seminar, March 2007)*. He also commented on the fact that these five organizations are *mission societies*, while the Missouri synod (LC-MS), which ELCK now has altar and pulpit fellowship with, is a *Church*.

<sup>16</sup> Concerning the history of MLTC, see the anniversary volume: Apel, Dean – Arkkila, Reijo – Otieno Olak, Richard (eds.), *The Word of God is Living and Active. Matongo Lutheran Theological College 1978-1998*

<sup>17</sup> Oral comments at the *ELCK History Seminar, March 2007*



The LCK President, Rev. Otete, puts a Bible in the foundation of MLTC, 1976



In 1994 Prof. Robert Preuss, a very famous theologian from the United States, lectured at MLTC on Theology of the Cross

border was closed at one time, the students had to travel from Kenya to Tanzania via Rwanda...

- LCK reacted against the theology taught by some of the Makumira teachers; among the mission societies co-operating with ELCK, especially SLM voiced criticism against the Makumira theology

**FOR SOME 30 YEARS** MLTC has been a very important institution in the life of ELCK – but that does not mean, that things are not changing. One fact, which cannot be neglected, is that MLTC is not, any longer, the sole theological institution within the Church.

The evangelistic training has gradually been mo-

ved to the Bible centres of *Kapenguria* and *Atemo*, while MLTC these days only gives courses for pastors to be. There is also, since the middle of the 1990's, still one more institution giving a theological training, but in this case only to women: the Deaconess training at *Ogango Lutheran Deaconess College* (OLDL).

The development of this deaconess training is very interesting, because it is a kind of *triple development*: of the work done within the women's department, of the academic work undertaken at MLTC, but also, as we have noted several times before, of the very successful educational work undertaken among girls – in fact from the early 1950's.

Kapenguria Bible Centre is used for training evangelists, but also for educating Christians in general, 2004



## Ethical issues

Another area which future research needs to deal with, is the ethical side of the Christian living. For many years (at least 20!), there has been an active discussion on *doctrinal issues* within ELCK, but the ethical perspectives of a Christian lifestyle need to be thoroughly discussed.

In his paper at the ELCK History Seminar, Rev. Momanyi discussed several important issues.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Written statement by Rev. John Momanyi Kururia, *Practical – ethical issues affecting ELCK*, ELCK History Seminar, March 2007





The first Deaconess graduation in 1996 at Ogango



Several of them dealt with marital life – the general development in Kenya today, but also the financial situation, means that a number of Christians (perhaps a majority of the young adults) are not properly married, but only living in a kind of co-habitation. That means that they lack both the old traditional security, provided by old customs, and the ethical and legal security provided by a Christian marriage. – There are also a number of other problems facing the Christians of Kenya today in this area: Polygamy, inheritance of wives... The list can be made long. As Rev. Momanyi noted: There is a clear lack, both of pre-marriage counselling and of marital counselling when a marriage has problems ...

He also brought up the strange situation, which ELCK has been suffering under for many years, that *the Church has problems in fulfilling one of its most important Christian duties: to provide the faithful with Holy Communion*. Lack of altar wine, or lack of finances to purchase it, means that many ELCK Christians today only can receive the Lord's Supper a few times per year, or perhaps not even once a year.

In my opinion, it is important that this ethical discussion not only continues, but that it in fact increases: ELCK needs to make clear ethical stands and help the Christians to live a committed Christian life

which is proper for “the saints”, as Paul calls us.

But it also means that ELCK has to deal not only with problems which are generally recognized, like polygamy and infidelity – but also with issues like *circumcision*, both *male and female*. My impression is that this issue has really been discussed in the Pokot area, but in many other areas of the Church, the silence has been dominant.

One related but very important aspect which seldom is discussed is this: do these old traditions create a *spiritual bondage*? And asking such a question is not strange. In fact it is very relevant. One thing which Church history teaches us is this:

Every culture has faced a number of challenges, often quite tough ones, when it has met living Christianity.

The circumcision issue is a topic which, in my opinion, is very important, and which has been discussed in many other Churches in Kenya, e.g. in the Roman Catholic Church. ELCK needs to join that discussion as well. A clear doctrinal position needs to be connected with sound ethical standards, because we as Christians, according to Eph. 5, are called to walk as “children of light”.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> A good starting point, although I don't agree with her in certain areas, could be

the books of Ephigenia W Gachiri: *Female Circumcision, With Reference to the*

*Agikuyu of Kenya*, and *Rite of Passage for Christian Boys*.



### Living in the present: between old visions and new challenges

As we have noticed, the Lutheran Christians of Kenya have made their own stand in many cases – we have noticed it as early as in the 1950's. It has been seen in a number of areas; previously it was easily seen in the ecclesiological field, and today also in many other areas.

An important instrument, when in the future analyzing the general development will be, I presume, the very thorough reports made by CORAT Africa. They describe and analyze the organization and performance of ELCK in a rather objective way.

I know of three such reports:

- Preliminary Draft, May 1999
- Organization Study, October 1999
- Report on ELCK, January 2005

They describe, in great detail, the work and status of ELCK and a number of aspects of the deve-

lopment.<sup>20</sup> It could be very interesting to compare them with, e.g., the old reports found in the AGM minutes and the SLM yearbooks.

These three reports will be a brilliant instrument for future researchers when they analyse the recent and not so recent history of ELCK.

**WE ALL LIVE** in the *present* situation.

The *past* – that is what we have dealt with in this investigation. We have, especially, found a number of visions which people have had. Many of these visions – often dealing with bringing the gospel to different groups of people in Kenya – are being fulfilled before our eyes.<sup>21</sup>

The *future*: that has to do with our visions and dreams given by God, how we deal with those things which are challenges to us and coming generations.



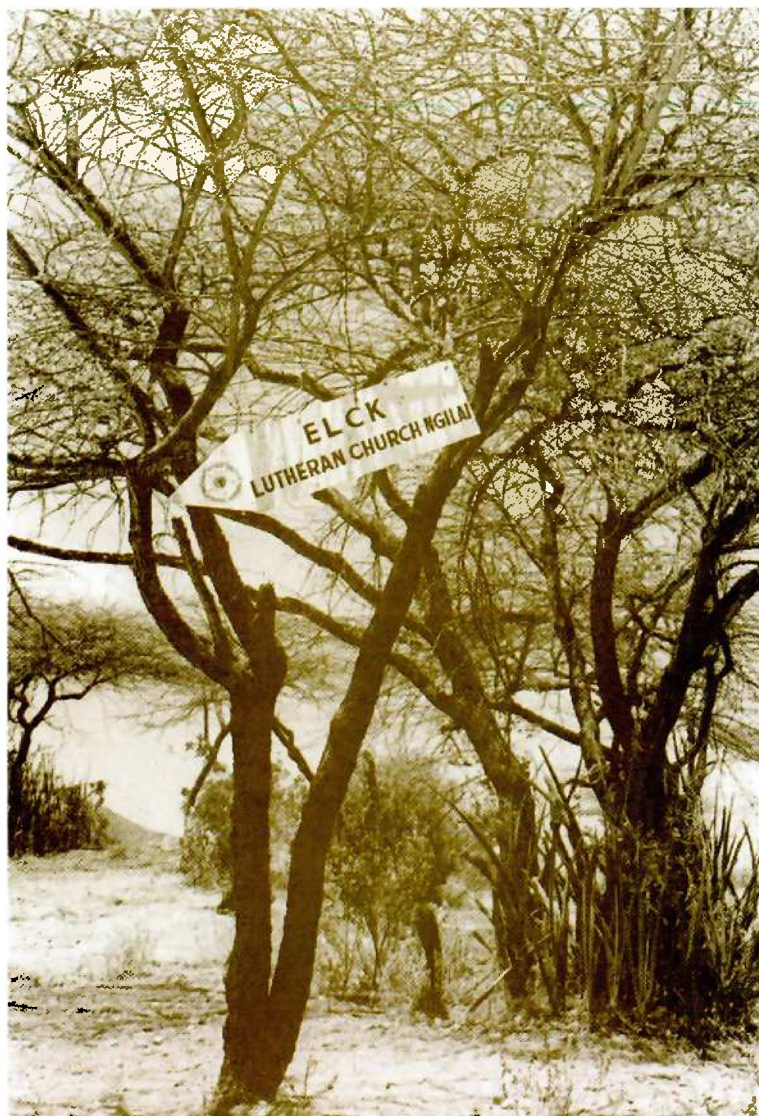
Two social challenges facing ELCK:  
Ministry to the Mentally Handicapped (Kisumu)

Work among street children (Nakuru)

<sup>20</sup> CORAT Africa: *Organization study of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. Preliminary Draft*, May 1999, *Organization study of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya*. October 1999, *Report on Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK) organizational and performance study*. January 2005

<sup>21</sup> It is really wonderful to notice, that among the appr. 25 “unreached peoples” in Kenya which were mentioned in the report *Unreached Peoples of Kenya Project*, which was published some 25 years ago, ELCK is now working among at least half a dozen: Boran, Digo, Gabbra, Maasai, Pokot, Samburu...





The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya – pointing the way!

LET US END THIS BOOK with a Bible passage which talks first about the majesty of God and then about the lifestyle of a Christian:

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments,  
and his paths beyond tracing out!

“Who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counsellor?”

“Who has ever given to God,  
that God should repay him?”

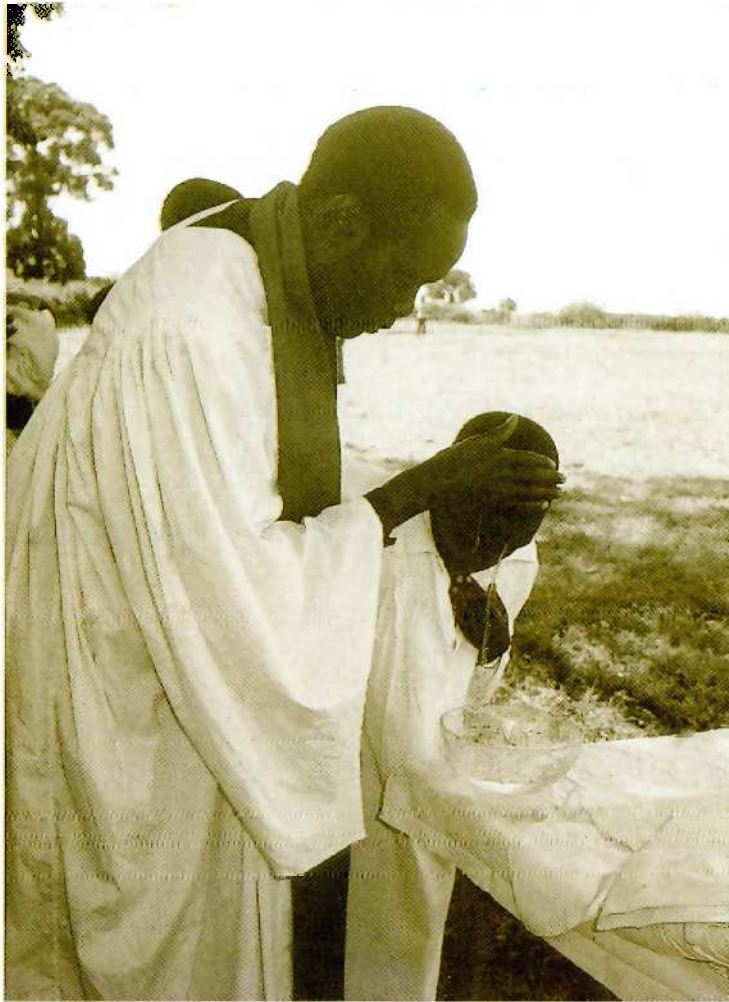
For from him and through him and to him are  
all things.

To him be the glory forever. Amen.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

ROM. 11:33–12:2 (NIV)





## **V. APPENDICES**

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

REV. 3:7 F, NIV



## 1. List of the chief officers of LCBTFK / LCK / ELCK 1958–2007<sup>1</sup>

	President	Vice President	Gen.secret.
<b>Lutheran Church Bibletrue Friends in Kenya</b>			
1959 <sup>2</sup>	Martin Lundström	James Otete	
1960 <sup>3</sup>	Martin Lundström	James Otete	
1961 <sup>4</sup>			
1962 <sup>5</sup>			
<b>Lutheran Church of Kenya</b>			
1963	Martin Lundström <sup>6</sup>	James Otete	
1964	Gustaf Norrback <sup>7</sup>	James Otete	
1965		Francis Nyamwaro <sup>8</sup>	
1966			
1967		Francis Nyamwaro <sup>9</sup>	
1968	J. Otete Nchogu <sup>10</sup>		
1969 <sup>11</sup>		Jeftha Michoro	Daniel Ogetii (app.)
1970			Gustaf Norrback <sup>12</sup>
1971 <sup>13</sup>		Richard Otieno Olak	Gustaf Norrback
1972	J. Otete Nchogu <sup>14</sup>		
1973 <sup>15</sup>		Samwel Mogeni	Nicholas Oenga
1974			John Momanyi <sup>16</sup>
1975		Samwel Mogeni <sup>17</sup>	
1976	J. Otete Nchogu <sup>18</sup>		Boris Sandberg?
1977		Samwel Mogeni	(Olak acting)
1978			(Sandberg)
1979 <sup>19</sup>		Nicholas Oenga	Richard O. Olak
1980	John Momanyi Kururia <sup>20</sup>		

By this time (1978–79), the titles *President* and *Vice President* were replaced by *Chairman* and *Vice Chairman*<sup>21</sup>; in 1978 the name of the Church was changed into *The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya*<sup>22</sup>

## Leaders of ELCK, 1980 – 23

Chairman / Bishop / Presiding Bishop

1980–1988, Chairman: John Momanyi Kururia

1988–1996, Chairman: Francis Nyamwaro Onderi

1996–2002, Bishop: Francis Nyamwaro Onderi

Since 2002, Bishop / Presiding Bishop: Walter Obare Omwanza

Vice Chairman / Vice Bishop etc.

Nicholas Oenga – Francis Nyamwaro – Samwel Mogeni – Luke Ogello – Thomas Asiago

General Secretary

Richard O. Olak – Daniel Daudi – John Halakhe

- 1 Note that the list of the Church leaders in *ELCK 1963–1988*, p. [8] is rather inaccurate. – Unless otherwise indicated, the information below is taken from the AGM minutes found in file A 1:1 (*ELCKA*, Itierio)
- 2 Report by Lundström in *BVMBV 1959:49* (where he, in Swedish, calls himself *chairman*); the Ex. Comm. minutes (Nov. 6, 1959), however, call Lundström *President* and Otete *Vice-President* (A 6:1; MBVA, RA)
- 3 Report by Lundström in *BVMBV 1960:48 f*; the expressions used are *chairman* and *vice chairman*
- 4 It seems no elections took place in 1961, see Synod minutes of L.C.K., Nov. 1961
- 5 No election took place, but structural issues were clarified. The “Minutes of the Synod of the Lutheran Church of Kenya” (Nov. 2–3, 1962) state: “*Min 11/62: Rev. M. Lundström should be the leader of the Church, an African should be the second leader.*” It was explained that the President and the Vice President of the Church are the leaders of the Church.”
- 6 AGM Min., Aug. 10, 1963: “*Min 10/63: Election of President.* Rev. M. Lundström was elected President for the Lutheran Church of Kenya for a time of four years. / *Min. 11/63. Election of Vice President.* Rev. J. Otete was elected Vice President of the Church for a time of one year.” It seems no other candidates were nominated.
- 7 AGM Min. 47/64, Sept. 26, 1964: “There was first a discussion about whether a President should be elected at this meeting but after voting it was found that the majority was in favour of election. The names suggested by the Ex. Com were presented and they were: Rev. J. Otete, Rev. G. Norrback, Rev. J. Michoro. After a prayer meeting Rev G. Norrback was elected President of L.C.K. for the period ending in February 1968. He got 34 votes, Rev. Otete got 6 and Rev. Michoro 3 votes... Rev. J. Otete will continue as Vice President”.
- 8 AGM Min. 11/65, Febr. 27, 1965: “*Election of Vice President.* The following three candidates were suggested by the Ex.Com.: Rev. J. Otete, Rev. F. Nyamwaro and Rev. J. Michoro. Rev. F. Nyamwaro was elected Vice President of the LCK for a period of two years.”
- 9 AGM Min. 6/67, Febr. 25, 1967: *Election of Vice President:* The following nominations, made by the Ex. Com. and the ministers, were presented: 1. Rev. Jeftha Michoro. 2. Rev. Francis Nyamwaro. 3. Rev. James Otete. / Rev. Francis Nyamwaro was reelected Vice President for a period of 2 years with 32 votes. Jeftha Michoro got 20 votes and James Otete 6 votes.”
- 10 AGM Min. 9/68, Febr. 21, 1968; Rev. Otete elected for four years (“*UCHAGUZI WA MKUU WA KANISA KWA MUDA WA MIAKA MINNE.* Mchungaji James Otete alichaguliwa na kura 34, Mchungaji Francis Nyamwaro – kura 25, Mchungaji Jeftha Michoro – kura 8, kura mbili zili[h]-aribika.”; minutes in Swa.)
- 11 Rev. Michoro was elected Vice President with 54 votes; Rev. Nyamwaro received 14 votes, Rev. Otieno 11. – AGM was informed that Ex. Comm. had *appointed* Rev. Ogetii to be the General Secretary (“Ex.Com. imemchagua Mchg. Daniel Ogetii kuwa katibu mkuu wa Kanisa”; Swa.; AGM Minutes, “Halmashauri Kuu”, 25-26/2 1969, *Min. 9/69.A-B*)
- 12 The AGM reversed the policy from the previous year, and *elected* a new General Secretary. Rev. Norrback got 37 votes, Rev. Olak 17 and Mr. J.E. Ekström 20 (AGM 25/2 197, *Min. 10/70*). AGM also decided to make an addition to the constitution (*Min. 13/70*), that the Gen. Secr. should be elected by AGM and not appointed.
- 13 Rev. Richard O. Olak was elected *Vice President* with 47 votes (Rev. Francis Nyamwaro got 16 votes and Rev. Nicholas Oenga 14). Rev. Gustaf Norrback was elected *General Secretary* with 56 votes (Rev. Oenga got 27 votes and Rev. Olak 0, having already been elected as V. President); AGM Minutes, 24/2/71, *Min. 12/71*.
- 14 Rev. James Otete was elected President (*Mkuu wa Kanisa*; Swa.) for four years. Votes: Nchogu 47, Nyamwaro 10, Mogeni 10; AGM Minutes, 24/2/72, *Min. 12/72*
- 15 Rev. Samwel Mogeni was elected *Vice President* (*Mkuu wa pili*; Swa.) for a period of two years with 31 votes (Rev. Olak 27 and Rev. Paul Edström 2). – Rev. Nicholas Oenga was elected *Gen. Secr.* for a period of 3 years with 35 votes (Mr. John Ekström got 22 and Rev. Francis Nyamwaro 4); AGM Minutes, 5-6/2/73, *Min. 12/73*.
- 16 Rev. John Momanyi was elected Gen. Secr. for the remaining 2 years with 30 votes (Rev. Olak 20 and Rev. Nyamwaro 8); AGM Minutes, 19-20/2/74, *Min. 16/74*
- 17 Rev. Samwel Mogeni was elected Vice President for a period of two years with 39 votes (Rev. Boris Sandberg 26 and Rev. Tapio Laitinen 7); AGM Minutes, 19-20/2/75, *Min. 19/75*
- 18 There is a gap at the *ELCKA*, Itierio, of AGM minutes for 1976 and 1977; this information is based on *BVMBV 1976:114*, 1977:105, 1978:99, and *Sändebudet* for 1976 and 1977 (information through Brita Jern)
- 19 Rev. Nicholas Oenga was elected *Vice Chairman* for a period of two years with 81 votes (Rev. Olak 57, Rev. Mogeni 2). Rev. Olak was elected *Gen. Secr.* for a period of three years with 87 votes (Rev. John Momanyi 52, Mr. Richard Onger 2); AGM Minutes, 6-7/3/79, *Min. 12/79*
- 20 Rev. John Momanyi Kururia received 70 votes, Rev. James Otete Nchogu 67, Rev. Boris Sandberg 12 (information from *Sändebudet* 5/1980, through Brita Jern)
- 21 AGM Minutes, 1-2/3/78, *Min. 17/78.C*, and 6-7/3/79, *Min. 11/79.3*
- 22 AGM Minutes, 1-2/3/78, *Min. 17/79.A*
- 23 From 1980 onwards, I have not had access to AGM minutes; consequently only the names are given in the order the office bearers have been serving



**Rev. Francis N Onderi in the middle is elected the first Bishop of ELCK in 1996.  
To the left: Gen. Sec. Daniel D. Mundia , to the right: Rev. Luke Ogello, Vice Chairman**



### Opening of the North West Diocese Office in 2004



## CONSECRATION OF BISHOP AMAYO



### Consecration of Bishop Lopeta



## Leaders of ELCK per Jan. 1, 2007<sup>24</sup>

### Lake Diocese – Head Office Kisumu

<i>Bishop</i>	Bp. Richard Amayo
<i>Diocesan Secretary</i>	Rev. Joseph Osumba
<i>Treasurer</i>	Mr. Ochieng'
Oyugis District	Rev. Joseph Mark Odongo
Eastern Nyanza District	Rev. David Omollo
Kisumu District	Bp. Richard Amayo

### South West Diocese – Head Office Itierio

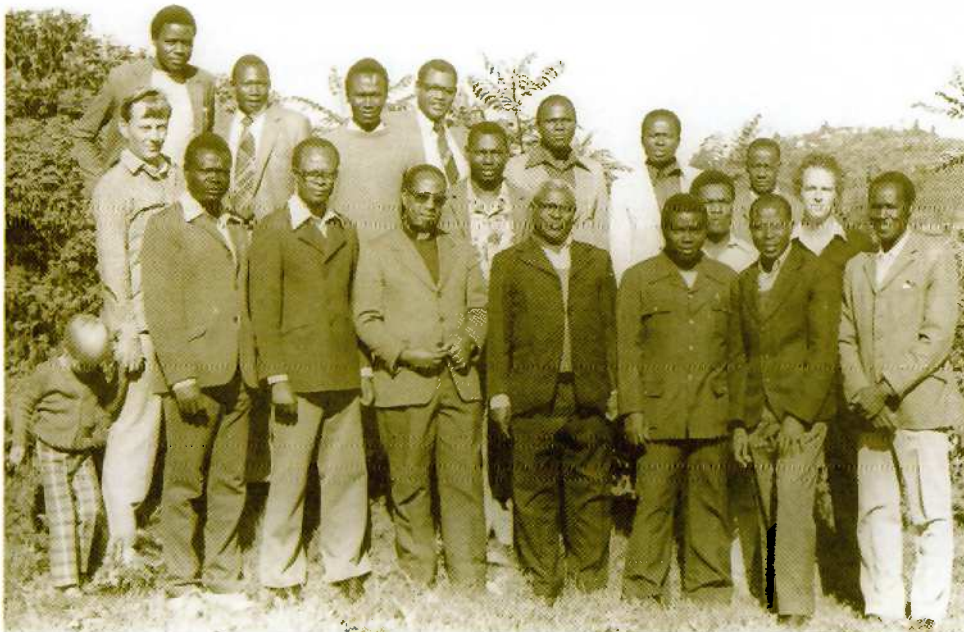
<i>Bishop</i>	Bp. Thomas Asiago
<i>Diocesan Secretary</i>	Rev. Evans Gwachi
<i>Treasurer</i>	Mr. Samson Maoto
Central District	Rev. John Moses Miruka
South Kisii District	Rev. Joseph Oichoe
Nyamira Chache	Rev. Nyabwanga
Western Nyanza	Rev. Benson Otieno
Nyamira Masaba	Rev. Samwel Nyang'ate
Nyamira Borabu	Rev. Thomas Nyerere
Nyamira North	Rev. James Aera

### Central Arch Diocese – Head Office Nairobi

<i>Bishop of Arch Diocese</i>	Rt. Rev. Walter Obare
<i>Diocesan Secretary</i>	Rev. Mark Anariko Onunda
<i>Treasurer</i>	Dr. Khainga
Nairobi	Rev. Bakari Kea
Nakuru	Rev. Jeremiah Nyang'au
Trans Mara	Rev. Samwel ole Makau
Mount Kenya	— — —
Kajiado	Rev. Noah ole Kolua

### North West Diocese

<i>Bishop</i>	Bp. William Lopeta
<i>Deputy Bishop</i>	Rev. Samson Lokipuna
<i>Diocesan Secretary</i>	Rev. Francis Kamondichi
<i>Treasurer</i>	Paul Kaliwanyangi
Sigor District	Rev. Philip Lodwar
Chepareria District	Rev. Samuel Powan
Kacheliba District	Rev. James Lokwanyang'
Kapenguria District	Rev. Samson Lokipuna
Lenan District	Bp. Wiliam Lopeta



The pastors of ELCK in the early 1980's

<sup>24</sup> This information is taken from *Kalenda* 2007, printed in late 2006; I have tried to correct spelling mistakes, etc.

## 2. List of national pastors in LCBTFK / LCK / ELCK 1958–1992

### The first national pastors, in general trained at Makumira<sup>1</sup>

*James Otete*, <sup>2</sup> ord. 1958; Vice President; ELCK President / Chairman, 1968–80

Nemwel Omae (attended shorter courses at MBS), ord. 1961

*Jefftha Michoro* (attended shorter courses at MBS), ord. 1964

*Francis Nyamwato Onderi*, ord. 1964; Vice President, Vice Chairman; Chairman 1988–1996, Bishop 1996–2002

*Nicholas Oenga*, ord. 1966

*Samwel Mogeni Gitenyi* – *Richard Otieno Olak* – *Daniel Ogetii* (later resigned); all ord. 1968

*John Momanyi Kururia*, ord. 1973; Gen. Secr. ELCK, Chairman 1980–88

Johnson Ataro Oyiego – Boaz Kiluma, ord. 1975

Joel Mose Ogutu, ord. 1977

John Nyang'au Osugo – Jared Oomo, ord. 1980

### National pastors trained at MLTC up to 1992 <sup>3</sup>

#### PTC I,<sup>4</sup> trained 1978–1982

*Walter Obare*, ord. 1982, Bishop 2002– ; Bishop in Central Arch Diocese

*Thomas Asiago*, ord. 1982; Bishop in South West Diocese

Japhet Rabach Dachi, Jacob Odhiambo, Henry Ot-wori, Robert Muhando Kigani, Peter Abuga, Joseph Oichoe

#### PTC II, trained 1982–1986

Peter Gusuta, Leonard Oner, Samson Mwita, David Omollo, James Aera, Alfred Kamokol, Henry Luyai Embenze, Daniel Kitur, *Luke Ogello*, Samuel Olemakau, Heanrich Kimani Ayega

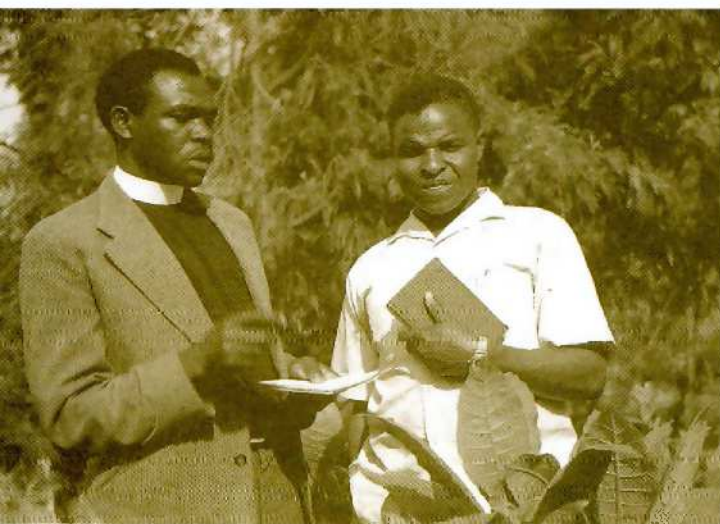
#### PTC III, trained 1988–1992

*Richard Amayo Ogoi*, ord. 1992; Bishop in Lake Diocese

David Onyango Chuchu, Joseph Ochola Omolo, Charles Masaranga Magutu, David Chore Mayoya, Patrik Atei Obondi, Peter Ndung'u, Nashon Oira Tiniga, Abdub Godana Galgalo, Moses arap Rutto, David Ogega Atura, Stanley Nyachieo Orango

#### SOC I,<sup>5</sup> trained 1990–1992

Henry Kabasa Okombo, Isaac Odera Osewe, Meshak Obadiah Anzala, Joseph Kiprotich Sabulei, James Mwigale Musa, Nelson Opondo Odipo, Meshak Ogilo Ngare, Joseck A. M. Mogoi, Joseph Osoro Nyang'au, Joseph Mark Odongo, Henry Ayiera Ndubi, Andrew Juma Nana, Samwel Tukey Lotukey, Joseph Osumba Ataro, Johnson Omweri Ongori, Samwel Nyang'ate Ondicki, Samson Lokipuna, James Bolo Okoth, Peter Moseti Manyoni, Elias Ochwangi



Pastoral conversation – early 1960's?

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the list in *ELCK 1963–1988*, p. 52

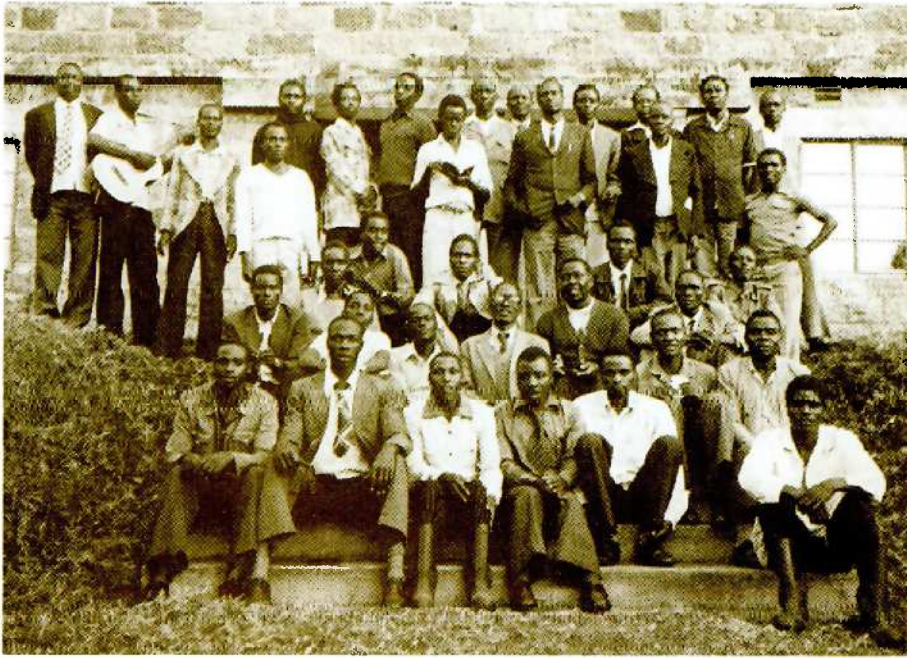
<sup>2</sup> The names of pastors who have served as leaders and/or Bishops of LCK/ELCK, as deputy leader, and/or general secretary, are given in *italics*.

<sup>3</sup> Basically, this information is taken from *ELCK 1963–1988*, p. 52, and compared with information from the MLTC Principal's office, especially the file labelled *MLTC student performance file*. – Because

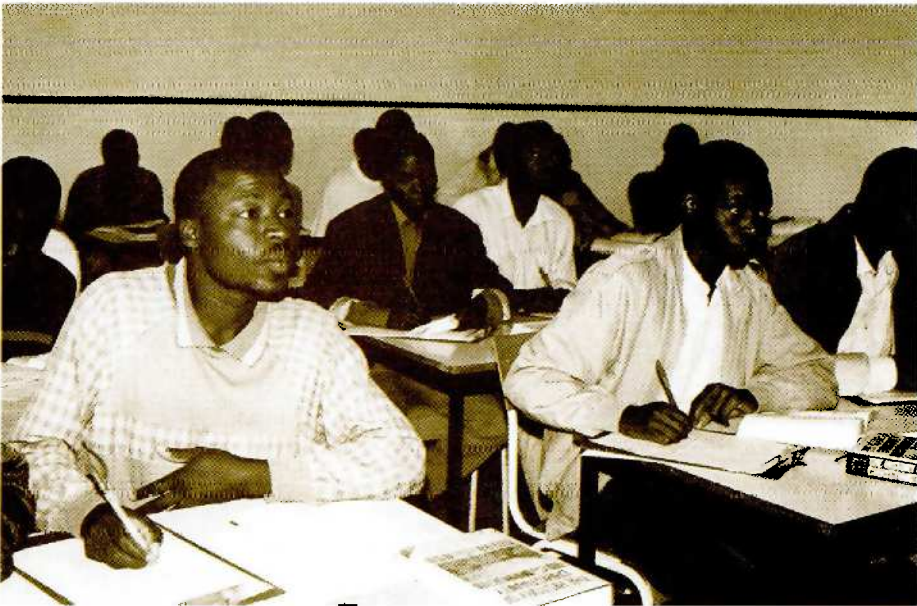
of lack of reliable sources (ordination lists), I have not been able to follow the development after 1992.

<sup>4</sup> Pastoral Training Course  
<sup>5</sup> Special Ordination Course





MLTC students, early 1980's



Attentive students at MLTC





Social evening at Matongo Bible School in 1965/66 – the present author serving tea to some of the LCK evangelists



The best tool of an evangelist:  
a Bible in his hand and Christ in his heart

### 3. List of evangelists serving in LCK in the early 1970's<sup>6</sup>

#### Evangelists

##### *South Kisii District*

Aristarko Ongoro	Petro Nyangweso	Daniel Ayiema	Richard Magutu
Enoch Bosire	Samson Ombori	Francis Matwere	Samwel Omosa
James Atika	William Oboiko	Jameson Atima	William Omari
Metusela Magoka	Wilson Keuya	Nemwel Sang'onde	Zablon Mariga

##### *North Kisii District*

Benjamin Ageta	Julius Tengeya	Daniel	Lazaro Gwachi
Elias Ochwang'i	Nahashon Nyandwaro	Francis Ong'ondi	Henry Ayiera
Nicholas Omariba	Peter Abuga	Johnson Nyansageria	Samwel Nyanaro
Johnson Nyamagwa	Samwel Nyang'ate	Sephania Orang'o	Joshua Mesa

##### *Nyanza District*

Dickson Abuor	Julius Okumu	Festo Mbare	Meshak Waga
Henry Luyai	Richard Otieno	Japhet Anditi	Robert Muhando
James Bolo	Salomon Awuor	John Oomo	Samwel Obwolo
John Ouko	Vitalis Awak		

##### *Nairobi District*

Lawrence Oliech	Tomas Osindi
-----------------	--------------

<sup>6</sup> This list is based on *Lutheran Church work in Kenya 1948–1973*, p. 23. – It is impossible to list all evangelists, trained and untrained, who have worked within

ELCK since 1948. Many of these mentioned above, have, however, been among the most faithful workers of the Church, serving the Lord for many years. (Some

of them have also later been ordained and served as pastors.)

## 4. List of districts, parishes and congregations in ELCK in 1987<sup>7</sup>

<i>District</i>	<i>Parish</i>	<i>Congregations</i>
South Kisii	Itierio	Itierio, Kisii town, Bogitaa, Motonto, Nyansacha, Botoro, Nyamerako, Itibo, Bomariba, Rianyatongo, Kirinanda
	Kiomoso	Kiomoso, Manga, Boruma, Nyanuya, Kineni, Ekerubo, Ekenyoro
	Gotchaki	Gotchaki, Mwata, Ikonge, Nyachenga, Kerina, Nyagesa, Riyabu
	Nyamaharaga	Nyamaharaga, Nguku, Masangora
	Monianku	Monianku, Ndonyo, Mapashi, Emburkeli, Ibencho, Otendo
	Nyamuya	Nyamuya, Nyacheki, Mobamba, Riyabu, Kerongorori, Omoringamu
North Kisii	Masai	Ang'ata, Kirangani, Sitet, Olemismis, Oidonyerego
	Bobembe	Bobembe, Eronge, Nyaigesa, Nyankongo, Nyamira, Kiabira, Mietare, Nyaigesa, Mageri
	Matongo	Matongo, Magwagwa, Bondeka, Nyansiongo, Mabariri, Gesigoro, Gesura, Omobiro, Gisage, Riomego
	Kenयो	Kenयो, Nyagokiani, Matorora, Erandi, Nyasio, Nyagware, Mwongori, Monire, Irande, Menyenga, Omokirondo Rigoma
	Ogango	Ogango, Nyamweturako, Ramba, Kabatia, Murunga, Mariba, Kiambere, Bokayo, Bosiang, Kionyomo, Riamoni
	Ekerenyo	Ekerenyo, Nyairanga, Ng'oina, Masobwa, Nyanderema, Ikonge
Nyanza District	Nyagonyi	Nyagonyi, Gesure, Kiareni, Nyandoche, Ingege, Tabaka, Ragogo, Nyachega
	Nyagowa	Nyagowa, Mititi, God Agulu, Kanyango, Katanga, Nyawita, Abambra, Nyagiya, Nyang'iel, Nyabola
	Othoro	Othoro, Anding', Bondo, Ndon, Ponge, Miriu, Magar, Lwanda, Dirubi, Kadie, Pala
	Samanga	Samanga, Rabware, Nyalunya, Akado, God Puro, Nyakakiya, Andiwo, Nyamariera
	Atemo	Atemo, Angeno, Dago, Kandegwa, Harambee, Kindu, God Miana, Rukongo, Lwala
	Migori	Migori, Nyaoke, Nyahera, Awendo, Kitembe, Kakrao, Kaguria

Ordination in Matongo, 1982



Sunday School in Kwarama



<sup>7</sup> List taken from *ELCK 1963-1988*, p. 55 f

Nairobi District	Uhuru Highway Kibera	Uhuru Highway, Kwindu Kibera, Kawangware
Kisumu District	Kisumu Kibogo  Mungoe	Kisumu, Orongo, Radiera (Ojwok), Aigo, Kaloka, Galili, Masanga Kibogo, Nyarombe, Sare, Lela, Radieda (Jwelu), Ngadi, Holo, Kokungu, Lwanda, Cherwa Mungoe, Eburasi, Esianzeywe
Pokot District	Chesta Chepareria Sekerr Kongolay	
Marsabit District	Marsabit	Marsabit, Anona, Chalbi, Furole
Kakamega D.	Bogondi  Bushiangala	Bogondi, Gahumbwa, Wazundi, Mugangu, Mbale, Mahanga, Waniwala Bushiangala, Mpaka, Kakamega, Emulele, Malimili, Eshinutsa, Elukari, Shisasari
Kericho District	Sigowet Chesinende	Sigowet, Sondu, Emdit, Mindililwet, Kalyongwet Saino, Ogoigei, Lugumek, Cheptebes, Chesinende



Rukongo Church





Late 1965: All SLM and SLEAF missionaries working in Kenya, together with Sigurd Stark (Mission Director SLM) and A. G. Stjernberg (Mission Director SLEAF)

## 5. List of missionaries serving in ELCK 1948–1988 / 1995 / 1997<sup>8</sup>

### Swedish Lutheran Mission, 1948–97

Martin & Gunborg Lundström 1948–64  
 Enok & Magda Salomonsson 1948–52  
 Anna-Brita Albertson 1950–1995/2005<sup>9</sup>  
 Kerstin Eriksson/Andersson 1954–65  
 K.G. & Iréne Ohlsson 1954/56–64  
 Valborg (Bojan) Petterson/Löwgren 1956–65  
 Gunhild Andersson 1959–98  
 Ingrid Nilsson/Holmqvist 1960–70  
 John-Erik & Brita Ekström 1961–76  
 Ann-Marie Andersson/Stark 1962–66  
 Josef & Judith Imberg 1965–71  
 Per-Ebbe & Kristina Ingvert 1965–69  
 Karin Fridolfsson/Johansson 1966–68

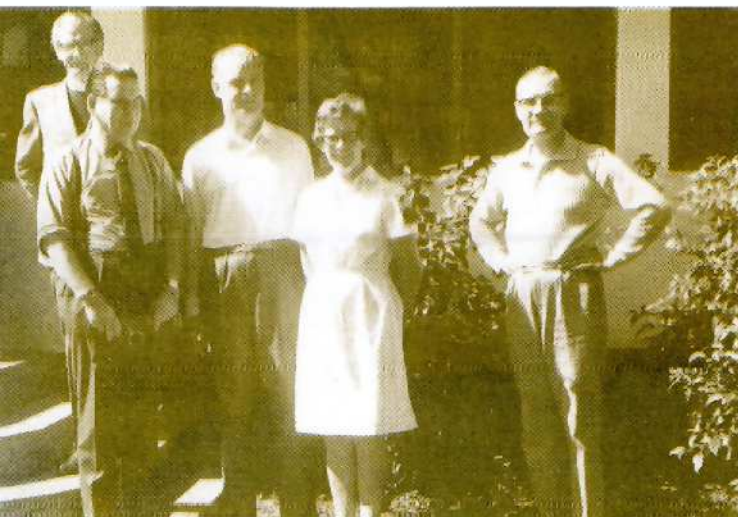
Elsie Sandberg/Bengtsson 1968–86  
 Erling Hansson 1970–1980, 83–84<sup>10</sup>  
 Gunnel Hansson 1970–80  
 Hans-Hugo & Barbro Nilsson 1972–80  
 Hanna-Karin Stark-Hechamo 1973  
 Greta Brorsson 1973–93  
 Ingemar & Inga-Lill Helgesson 1974–80/84  
 Lars & Britt-Marie (Tufvesson-)Brixen 1974/75–80  
 Bodil Hansson 1977–78  
 Carin Johansson/Johanneson 1977–80  
 Margaretha Persson 1977–78  
 Karin Johansson 1978–85  
 Harald & Gunnel Waldemarsson 1979–86  
 Ingegerd Johansson 1979–88

<sup>8</sup> This list is based on information list in *ELCK 1963–1988*, p. [53]. For three mission societies it has been possible to add missionary service later than 1988: Concerning SLM missionaries (up to 1997), see Gustafsson – Imberg – Wiberg, *Som en*

*brusande flod*, p. 32 – concerning SLEAF missionaries (up to 1993), cf. Bergman, Siv (ed.), *Harambee! Eee!!! Missionärer berättar*, p. 77 – concerning LEAF and SLEAF missionaries (up to 1995), cf. Reijo Arkkila, *Niin kaukana kuin pippuri kasvaa*, p.

190 ff.

<sup>9</sup> After her retirement in 1995, she remained in Kenya where she died  
<sup>10</sup> Sven Klemets is the only missionary, so far, who has died in service in Kenya



Leaf representatives visiting Itierio in 1969: From l. to r.: Josef Imberg (SLM), Rev.Toivo Rapeli, executive director of LEAF, Sigurd Stark (SLM Mission Director), Majgret Stjernberg (SLEAF), Professor Jouko Vuorinen, chairman of LEAF

Susanne Giselsson/Andersson 1979  
 Inga Paulsson 1980  
 Roland & Ingrid Gustafsson 1980–91  
 Hans-Benny & Jytte Jacobsen-Rom 1981–87  
 Christer & Karin Johansson 1983–86  
 Barbro Nilsson 1983–86/96  
 Alf Bach- & Margit Sommer-Kofoed 1983–90  
 Flemming Møller 1983–84  
 Nils-Evert Nyberg 1984–93  
 Karin Gunnarsson/Ekström 1984–  
 Lisbeth Thomsen 1984–85  
 Paula Söderlind 1985–  
 Per & Signe Munch 1985–93  
 Marianne Hansen 1985–86  
 Gunnel Gustavsson 1985–86, 89–  
 Karin Andersson 1985–95  
 Per-Ole Rasmussen 1986–87  
 Ann-Christine Smetana/Apel 1987–92  
 Kerstin Hansson 1987–88  
 Dorrit Bakkegård-Pedersen 1987–95  
 Stefan & Annmarie Ekström 1987–96  
 Marie Svensson/Lundin 1988–90  
 Per-Martin & Gunnel Hjort 1988–91  
 Inger Svensson 1988  
 Jesper Holm-Nielsen 1988  
 Christine Bak 1989–90

Helene Vester-Nielsen 1990–91  
 Rune & Katrina Imberg 1990–96  
 Kerstin Nilsson 1990–  
 Hedvig Jakobsen 1991–93  
 Gunner Jensen 1993–94  
 Eskil Engström 1994–97  
 Helena Sandberg 1995–96  
 Erik & Ann-Mari Wiberg 1995–97

### **Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland, 1963–95**

Gustav & Märta Norrback 1963–73  
 Sven Klemets 1964–80,88–90  
 Linnea Klemets 1964–80,88–91  
 Majgret Stjernberg/Lillsjö 1966–71  
 Maj-Len Åbonde/Onditi 1968–76  
 Jorma & Brita Iiskola 1970–79/93<sup>11</sup>  
 Boris & Iris Sandberg 1973–86  
 Helena Holmgård/Holst 1975/86  
 Lisen Enlund/Söderbacka 1977–84, 87  
 Bernhard Söderbacka 1987–  
 Tom & Siv Bergman 1979–90  
 Alf & Mona Wallin 1981–94  
 Birgitta Nynäs 1982–93  
 Solveig Nylund 1985–  
 Olof & Brita Jern 1989–  
 Rut Åbacka 1991–  
 Marie-Helene Bernas 1991–  
 Kristian & Anna Norrback 1992–  
 Bertel & Karin Nygård 1992–  
 Kristian & Chamilla Sjöbacka 1993–  
 Ingmar & Marlene Klemets 1995–

### **World Mission Prayer League, 1969–88**

Paul Edstrom 1969–88  
 Margaret Wall 1972–81  
 Alpha Jaques 1972–75, 84  
 Mike & Gail Koski 1973–  
 Andrew & Lora Wendler 1976–  
 Robert Ward 1977–  
 Michael Christensen 1981–85  
 Bruce Kemp 1984–88  
 Chris Uhlberg 1986–87

### **Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland, 1970–95**

Salme Rinta-Komsi 1970–89

<sup>11</sup> When missionaries have served periods with a long interval, I have indicated that with a slash ("/")

Taina Korpivaara 1970–72  
 Elma Lappeteläinen/Martikainen 1971–79  
 Tuula Sääksi 1971–81  
 Tapio & Elsi Laitinen 1973–77,94–  
 Valma Mononen 1974–81  
 Tuula Heikkilä 1974–80,83–91  
 Anja-Maija Vanhanen 1974–  
 Maija-Lisa Anttio 1974–75  
 Paavo & Annikki Erelä 1977–83,88–90  
 Anna-Kaisa & Antti Kuokkanen, 1977–83,87–89  
 Pirkki Möttönen/Igenda 1977–  
 Kylliki Talvi-Oja, 1977–82, 92–93  
 Reijo & Marjatta Arkkila, 1977–79, 86–87, 91–94  
 Maija-Leena & Mauri Lehtimäki 1978–80  
 Jaakko & Elvi Lounela 1979–86  
 Jalo & Rauha Soininen 1980–81  
 Aatos & Aino Vesamäki 1980–88, 92  
 Veikko & Irja Aro-Heinilä 1981–87  
 Leena Mannermaa 1981–89  
 Tuuli Tamminen 1981–87  
 Helvi Kesti 1981–83  
 Eija-Riitta Turunen 1981–83  
 Sirkka-Liisa Kuula 1981–84,91–; Tapio Kuula 1991–  
 Antti & Heli Kujanpää 1982–85  
 Marjatta Kurki 1982–88  
 Paavo & Hilka Toikka 1983–84  
 Raija Leino 1983–87  
 Pasi & Sirkka-Liisa Suvanto 1983–86  
 Timo & Varpu Viitala 1984–90  
 Anna-Liisa Kakkinen/Aro-Heinilä 1984–87  
 Raija Partanen 1985–  
 Outi Vainio 1985–93  
 Sakari & Pirjo Nurmesvita 1985–88,94–  
 Eeva Kröger/Niemeläinen 1986–89  
 Maarit Ruhela 1986  
 Arto & Anneli Seppänen 1986–92  
 Pauli & Kaija Heikkinen 1987–93  
 Markus & Ruut Andersson 1987–90  
 Mirja-Leena Tanttu/Pattison 1987–94  
 Eeva Kokkonen 1987–  
 Vuokko Peltola 1987–  
 Antti & Liisa Saarenketo 1987–90  
 Seppo & Tarja Piisola 1987–  
 Sylvi Pulkkinen 1987–92  
 Timo & Vuokko Reuhkala 1987–94  
 Matti & Meeri Auramo 1988–93  
 Väinö & Mairikki Uusitalo 1988–89, 94–

Ritva Vuorimäki 1988–90  
 Marja Miettunen 1989–93  
 Anssi & Marja Simojoki 1989–  
 Tuija Lamminmäki 1989–90  
 Reino & Reija Toikka 1989–  
 Merja Kramsu 1989–92  
 Veli & Paivi Männistö 1990–91  
 Kari & Aila Liedes 1990–93  
 Maarit Lamminparras/Seppänen 1990–92  
 Olli & Tiina Kukkonen 1991–  
 Pertti & Anita Pussinen 1991–93  
 Tuula Leppänen 1991–  
 Jukka & Iris Luukkonen 1993–94  
 Heikki & Eeva Kivikkola 1993–95  
 Antti & Liisa Räsänen 1994–

#### **Norwegian Lutheran Mission, 1977–88**

Karsten & Eilei Valen 1977–81  
 Torleif & Marie Vegge 1977–85  
 Bjarne & Magni Taranger 1977–86  
 Erling & Kirsten Lundebj 1977–87  
 Asbjørn & Bjørg Vegge 1977–  
 Britt Høie 1977  
 Turid Toft 1977–  
 Tjostolv & Ingeborg Vittersø 1977–  
 Skuli & Kjellrun Svavarsson 1978–82  
 Ingrid Naess 1979–  
 Gustav & Elisabeth Loland 1979–81  
 Kjell & Eldbjørg Strømme 1979–88  
 Tone Høgetveit 1979–87  
 Tore & Marit Vågen 1980–86  
 Oddvar & Berit Vold 1980–83  
 Jon & Marianne Østby 1980–  
 Arve & Ingrid Johannes Myra 1981–  
 Leif & Marit Tingbø 1981–  
 Kjartan Jónsson & Valdis Magnúsdóttir 1981–  
 Eilef & Ellen Gard 1981–  
 Johannes & Klara Selstø 1981–  
 Arthur & Marit Strømme 1981–88  
 Ragnar Gunnarsson & Hrónn Sigurdardóttir 1982–  
 Astrid Mangelrød 1982–  
 Solveig Stige 1983–85  
 Grethe Østebø 1985–88  
 Even & Åse Eftestøl 1985–86  
 Anita Pedersen 1986–  
 Bjørg Wilhelmsen 1988–



## 6. Statistics of LCBTFK / LCK / ELCK 1958 – 2007

### a. Statistics of LCBTFK / LCK / ELCK 1958 – 1993 <sup>1</sup>

Year	Ev.s	N/Past.	Miss.	B/C	X-tians	C/Pr.pl.	Par. <sup>2</sup>
1948	0	0	4	0	0	1	–
1949	0	0	4	0	0	–	–
1950	0	0	5	0	0	–	–
1951	0	0	5	19	19	2	–
1952	0	0	5	35	54	3	–
1953	0	0	3	91	142	6?	–
1954	1	0	5	140	289	6?	–
1955	1	0	5	32	308	–	–
1956	–	0	7	142	–	7	–
1957	6	0	7	310	759	9	–
1958	–	1	7	–	1 200	16	–
1959	19	1	7	889	2 178	20 <sup>3</sup>	–
1960	–	1	9	799	–	24	
1961	–	1?	7	1 019 <sup>4</sup>	–	27	
1962	–	2	11	753	–	40 <sup>5</sup>	
1963	–	2	12	–	–	(55)–	(7/8) <sup>6</sup>
1964	–	4	10?	–	–	–	
1965	38	4	13	–	6 000	–	
1966	42	5	13?	–	–	61	8
1967	43	8	14	–	–	59	8
1968	45	9	14	–	8 000	65	9
1969	–	–	–	–	8 200	66	9

<sup>1</sup> The statistics 1948–1993 are taken from Imberg, *A brief history of ELCK*, p. 47 and in general based on *BVMBV* (the information often coming from the official AGM reports). It is important to notice that many columns for different reasons are rather inexact. The best use of them is to see them as trend indicators: The number of evangelists started to expand in the early 1960's when the Bible School began – the number of pastors rose in the early 1980's when students trained at MLIC were ordained – the number of missionaries had its peak around 1990 – the number

of baptisms early in the 1960's is surprisingly high – ELCK has had a tendency of doubling its membership every ten years, at least up to the early 1990's – a dramatic increase of congregations took place in the 1980's, of parishes in the 1990's, etc.

<sup>2</sup> The abbreviations list the numbers, in the following order, of: Evangelists – National Pastors – Missionaries – Baptized (or Confirmed if baptized in another Church) – Christians – Congregations/Preaching places – Parishes.

<sup>3</sup> Note the rapid increase of the number of congregations (preaching pl.) in the end of

the 1950's, from 7 (1956) to 20 (1959).

<sup>4</sup> This figure is staggering. In 1961, 1 national pastor together with one or two missionary pastors baptized, or confirmed, more than 1000 persons! Cf. the figures with those from 1985 and 1990, e.g.

<sup>5</sup> A second increase of congregations (etc.) took place in the early 1960's, from 24 (1960) to 40 (1962)

<sup>6</sup> These parishes were: Kebirigo, Matongo, Itierio, Gotichaki, Keumbu, Nyagowa, Ot-horo and Nairobi, while the congregations were appr. 55; see *ELCK 1963–1988*, p. [8]

Year	Ev.s	N/Past.	Miss.	B/C	X-tians	C/Pr.pl.	Par.
1970	52	8	19 <sup>7</sup>	—	8 534	68	9
1971	50	8	19	—	(9 000)	62	9
1972	46	8	19	—	—	60	8 <sup>8</sup>
1973	50 <sup>9</sup>	7	26	—	—	64	9 <sup>10</sup>
1974	50	7	27	—	—	68	10
1975	50	9	34	—	—	84	11
1976	52	9	31	—	—	104	12
1977	67?	10 ?	53 <sup>11</sup>	—	—	114	16
1978	64	11	56	—	—	121	17
1979	78	12	68	—	—	129	19
1980	78	12	54	—	—	132	22
1981	86	12	66	—	—	135	23
1982	79	20	—	—	(25 000)	—	—
1983	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1984	—	—	73	1 777	—	185	25
1985	(80)	32	—	2 120	28 897	(184)	(29)
1986	80	32	71	—	—	191	33
1987	—	—	—	—	—	—	(32) <sup>12</sup>
1988	79	30	—	—	—	201	35
1989	86	33	94 <sup>13</sup>	—	—	248	37
1990	72	—	—	2 884	41 738	(268)	(41)
1991	92	22	—	—	44 713	283	44
1992	79	33/60 <sup>14</sup>	(49)/75	3 700	(48 400)	327	58
1993	90	(55)/60	75	3 383	51 920	339	—

7 The number of missionaries began to increase when WMPL joined the LCK work in 1969 and LEAF in 1970

8 In 1972 LCK got a new structure, the district level, when the parishes were divided into 4 districts: North Kisii, South Kisii, Nyanza, Nairobi. Within a few years, the number of districts increased to nine. The new districts were Kisumu, Pokot, Marsabit, Kakamega, and Kericho (*ELCK 1963-1988*, p. [10] ff).

9 A list of evangelists working within ELCK in the early 1970's are found in App. 3

10 A list of congregations and parishes – pastors – evangelists – missionaries – workers (clinics, stations etc.) as per 1973 are found as an appendix in *Lutheran Church work in Kenya 1948-1973*, p. 22 ff

11 This was the year when NLM entered the LCK work

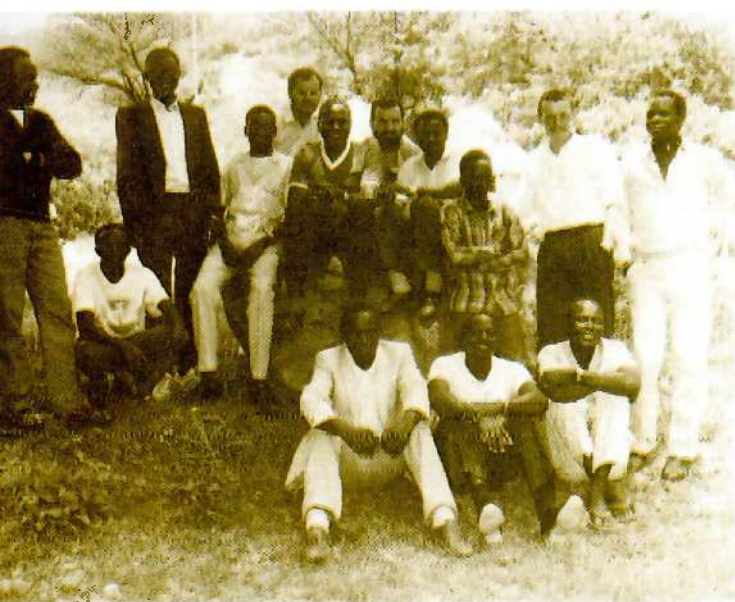
12 A list of districts / parishes / congregations within ELCK per 1987 is found in App. 4

13 The number of missionaries working within ELCK started to grow from 1977, when NLM joined the ELCK work, and had its peak appr. 1989 with 94 missionaries. A few years later the number began to drop. A list of missionaries (serving up to 1988-1997, depending on mission society) is found in App. 5.

14 A list of national pastors ordained up to 1992 are found in App. 2

## b. Statistics taken from the ELCK Calendar, 1990–2006

Year	Ev.s	N/Past.	Miss.	B/C	X-tians	C/Pr.pl.	Par.
1990	79	29	84		+ 39 000 <sup>16</sup>		
1991	79	29	85		+ 41 738		
1992	79	60	75		+ 41 738		
1993	90	60	75		+ 50 000		
1994	90	60	73		+ 55 000		
1995	158	57	76		+ 55 000		
1996	158	57	70		+55 000		
1997 <sup>17</sup>	158 (100)	57(49)	(57)		+55 000 (60 000)	(544)	
1998	158	75			+55 000		
1999							
2000	158	75			60 000		
2001	180	98			65 000		
2002	180	109			65 000		
2003	180	109			65 000		
2004	180	109			70 000 <sup>18</sup>		
2005	185	121			alm.100 000 <sup>19</sup>		
2006	185	121			alm.100 000		



Pokot pastors and evangelists

Evangelistic training course at Chesta, 1991

<sup>15</sup> The figures 1990–2006 are taken from the ELCK Calendar, *Kalenda 1991–2007* (the figures of 1990 are found in the Calendar for 1991, etc.)

<sup>16</sup> The number of Christians are given as *zaidi ya 39000* (Swa.; *Kalenda 1991*)

<sup>17</sup> In Gustafsson – Imberg – Wiberg, *Som en brusande flod...*, p. 62, the figures for 1997

are given as: 100 evangelists, 49 pastors, 57 missionaries, 544 congregations and (appr.) 60000 members. These figures are based on the AGM report in April 1998.

<sup>18</sup> This figure is extremely low and cannot be correct. If the figures in the early 1990's are, at least fairly, correct, the figure 70000 is an impossibility, considering the number

of persons who are normally baptized within ELCK any given year. Unless a lot of congregations have died out during the period 1994–2004, the real figure must be some far higher.

<sup>19</sup> *karibia 100.000* ("approaching 100.000"; Swa.)



## Acknowledgments

IT IS BOTH A PLEASURE and a privilege to me, at the end of this book, to express my sincere thanks to persons and organizations who and which have assisted me in my work.

I was very happy to receive the assignment by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya to write this book. It was Bishop Obare who initially came up with the idea in 2003. I hope that this book at least partly will live up to the expectations of him and the ELCK Christians!

But it would not have been possible to fulfil this work without the support and assistance by Swedish Lutheran Mission (*Evangelisk-Luthersk Mission – Bibeltrogn Vänner*) and the Lutheran School of Theology, Gothenburg (*Församlingsfakulteten*).

I am very grateful to God for what he, over many years, has given me through these three important vessels in his work: ELCK, SLM and LST. At the same time, I am very happy that I have been allowed to serve in them, and for the way in which they treated me and my family.

BEFORE I MENTION persons who have assisted me in a special way, I would like to say something about the setting, the *milieu*, in which this book has come into existence.

As a post-graduate student in the 1980's, I had the privilege to visit some of the finest libraries in the world. I will never forget the *British Library* and the *Lambeth Palace Library* in London, *The Bodleian Library* and the *Pamphlet Room of Pusey House* in Oxford, and the *Oratory in Birmingham*. While in Sweden I have spent many

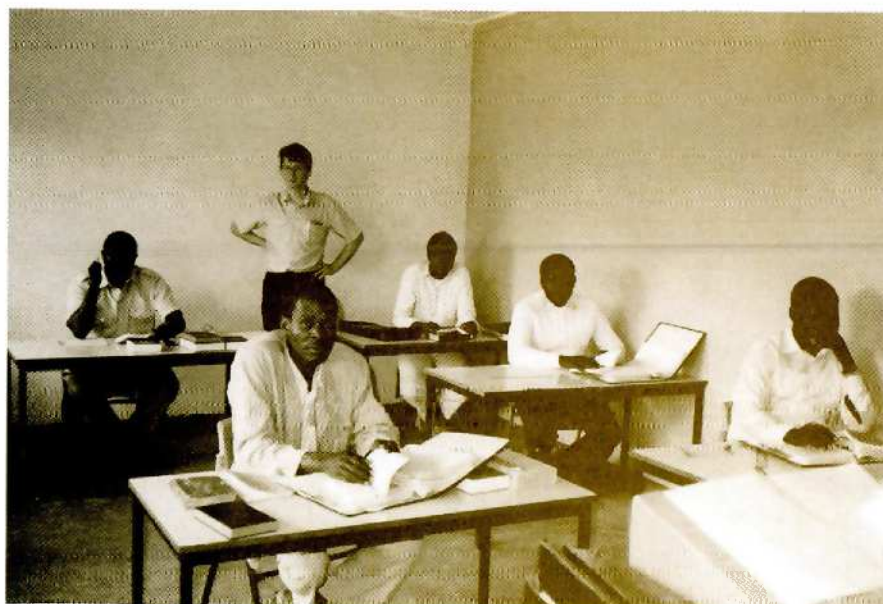
hours in the *University Library of Lund*, and later in the *National Archives of Sweden* in Stockholm.

When I think of these impressive institutions, and compare them with the library at *Matongo Lutheran Theological College*, I almost get speechless. The MLTC library is very, very small (having perhaps some 10.000 volumes) when compared with the libraries mentioned above – but *bigger* is not necessarily *better*!

From my own experience I would say: Sitting in the MLTC library, with its selection of books, being surrounded by *amaryllis* and *bougainvillea* to such an extent that the compound looks like a botanical garden, hearing the sounds of Africa, smelling the tropical heat, viewing the *Nandi hills* at the Equator, recognizing that one of the biggest lakes in the world is within walking distance and then sensing: in this college people love the Lord



MLTC as a meeting place (1990's): Rev. James Otete, the first national pastor and Church President, Rev. Dr. Reijo Arkkila, the first MLTC Principal



The author working in the MLTC library, March 2007

The author at work at MLTC: Teaching the Diploma Course, 1991–1993 (standing between Bishops Obare and Asiago)

and they love his Word – *that* creates something which cannot be bought for money: *creativity* and *inspiration*..

**IF YOU AS A READER** can feel that this book is written with love – to the Lord, to the Christian Church, to the Christians of Kenya, to ELCK – and perhaps even inspiration (I hope so!), one of the reasons is this: *Parts of this book were written in the MLTC library*. Even if the library has clear limitations due to its smallness, it is a wonderful and very creative setting for academic work. I will never forget those wonderful months at Matongo.

**WHEN THIS HAS BEEN SAID**, I would like to express my gratitude to a number of people, who have made this book possible. While working in Kenya (Dec. 2006 – March 2007) a number of persons assisted my family and me in different ways.

I am very grateful to

- *Pres. Bishop Walter Obare Omwanza, Gen. Sec. John Halkano Halakhe* and others in the Head Office of ELCK for the support given in a number of ways, and also for the very cordial welcome given to us when we were in Nairobi (and Bondo!)

- *Rev. Osmo Harjula* and the *Staff and workers* at MLTC for the wonderful months we spent there, especially for many memories from the services in the Chapel

- the *students of MLTC* for many inspiring hours spent together

- the librarian, *Mr. Morgan Bulla*, and *Mrs. Annah Samwel* for generous assistance in library and archive matters

- *Bishop Thomas Asiago* and the *workers at Diocese Head Office Itierio* – without your assistance, it would have been very difficult to write this book

- all *our friends in the ELCK in general* – you are many, and we remember you with gratitude

- all *friends* especially in the *Matongo area* – we will never forget your hospitality and the Sunday services

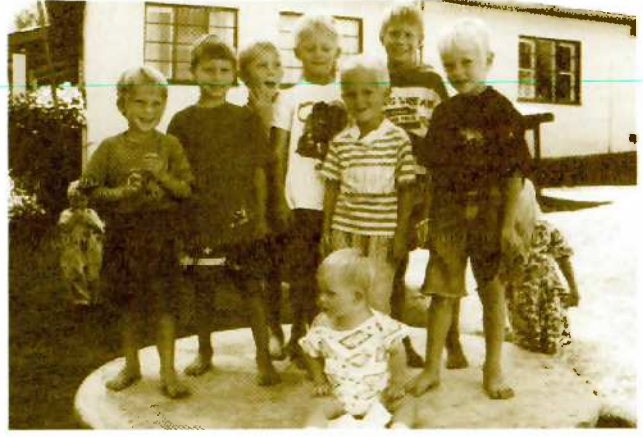
- *Alice Moraa with family* – thank you for wonderful memories from Bondeka!

- *Samwel Kerongia* and *Siseria* – you assisted us in our home in so many ways, and your songs will always live in our heart!

**WHILE IN KENYA**, I made interviews with some of the earliest workers: *Ev. Peter Nyangweso, Ev. Metusela Magoka, Rev. John M. Kururia, Rev. Samwel M. Gitenyi, Rev. James O. Nchogu, Bishop Thomas Asiago, Ev. Aristarko O. Gwaro, Rev. Nicholas O. Arosi, Chief Lawrence Oliech.* – Your willingness to share your memories of and reflections on the early days has been very valuable to me.



Some of the participants in the ELCK History Seminar, March 2007



Missionary kids

**A NUMBER OF PEOPLE** have assisted me through participating in seminars in Kenya (March 2007) and Norway (Oct. 2007), most of them by presenting papers, almost all by giving comments, sharing memories and commenting on many of the views presented in this book:

*In Matongo:* Most Rev. Dr. Walter Obare, Bishop Richard Amayo Ogesi, Bishop Thomas Asiago, Rev. John M. Kururia, Rev. Nicholas O. Arosi, Rev. Samwel M. Gitenyi, Rev. James Otete Nchogu, Rev. Erling Lundeby, Rev. Samson Lokipuna, Rev. Dr. Reijo Arkkila, Rev. Osmo Harjula, Rev. Hamilton T. A. Shihemi, Rev. Richard O. Olak, Rev. Dr. Joseph Ochola Omolo, Rev. John Moseti, Rev. Moses K. Okoyo, Mr. John Michoro, Mrs. Marjatta Arkkila, Mrs. Katrina Imberg. – Bishop Francis Nyamwaro participated through a paper.

*In Norway:* Jaakko Lounela, Erling Lundeby, Karsten Valen, Karin G. Ekström, Roland Gustafsson.

**A NUMBER OF PERSONS** connected with SLM, in Kenya and Sweden, have assisted me and my family during our recent stay in Kenya and in the work undertaken in Sweden, especially

- Roland Gustafsson (Mission Director), Mrs. Karin Gunnarsson Ekström (Kenya Desk), Gunnel Gustavsson, Ingegerd Johansson, Jacob Birgersson – and many others

**SEVERAL ORGANIZATIONS** in Sweden have made it possible for me to work with this book. Here I would like to especially mention

- the Board of Governors of the Lutheran School of Theology in Gothenburg (*Församlingsfakulteten*), especially Rev. Dr. Patrik Toräng, Mr. Per Bodemar and Rev. Dr. Bengt Birgersson

- the Staff of LST, especially Ass. Principal Johannes Hellberg and Dr. Torbjörn Johansson

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- Birgitta Ellison with making an enormous amount of photo copies

- Marie Person and Gunhild Andersson with correcting (or trying to correct!) my English; Marie also with proof reading

- Brita Jern in the SLEAF office

- Reijo Arkkila, Erling Lundeby and Roland Gustafsson with checking my facts; I am very grateful when they have agreed with me, and I have listened carefully when they have not!





ELCK – a Church where young and old come together, praising the Lord

**THE MAJORITY OF THE PHOTOS** emanate from the SLM Head Office in Stockholm. It is difficult to know exactly who the photographers are, but some photos must have been taken by the Lundström and Ohlsson families; many modern photos are taken by *Ann-Mari Wiberg*. I have also received assistance from *Kerstin Andersson*, *John-Erik Ekström*, my brother *Gösta Imberg* and my own family. – The NLM office in Oslo (through *Lundeby* and *Erik Kjebekk*) has supplied me with a number of photos, especially from W. Pokot and Marsabit, while a number of photos from the Luo and Maragoli areas emanate from the SLEAF office (through *Brita Jern*). I am also grateful to the SEM (EFS) office for assisting me with some old photos.

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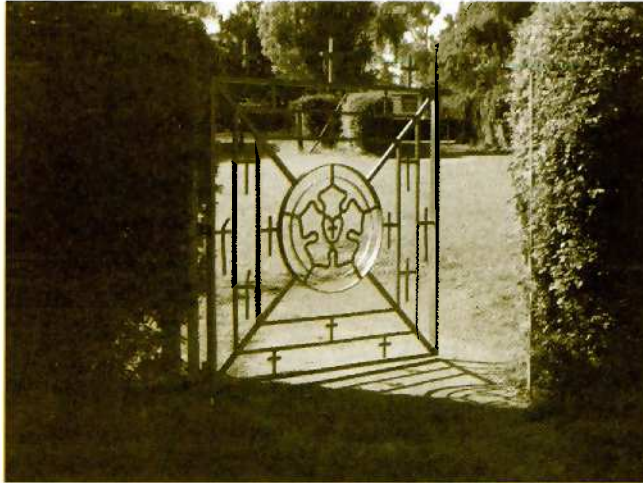
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daily newspaper





Egesieri ngiasie ase  
 'Boruoti bwa Igoro  
 'Korangerigwa nkoreo  
 'S' obwanchani bwa Yeso.  
 Obuya 'bonene, Nyasae,  
 Egesieri nkeigoire  
 Bono Asende,  
 Nkeigoire asende<sup>1</sup>

Liko lango moja wazi,  
 Ni lango la Mbinguni;  
 Na wote waingiao  
 Watapata nafasi.  
 Lango ndiye Yesu Bwana  
 Wote waingie kwake.  
 Lango! Lango  
 La Mbinguni ni wazi.

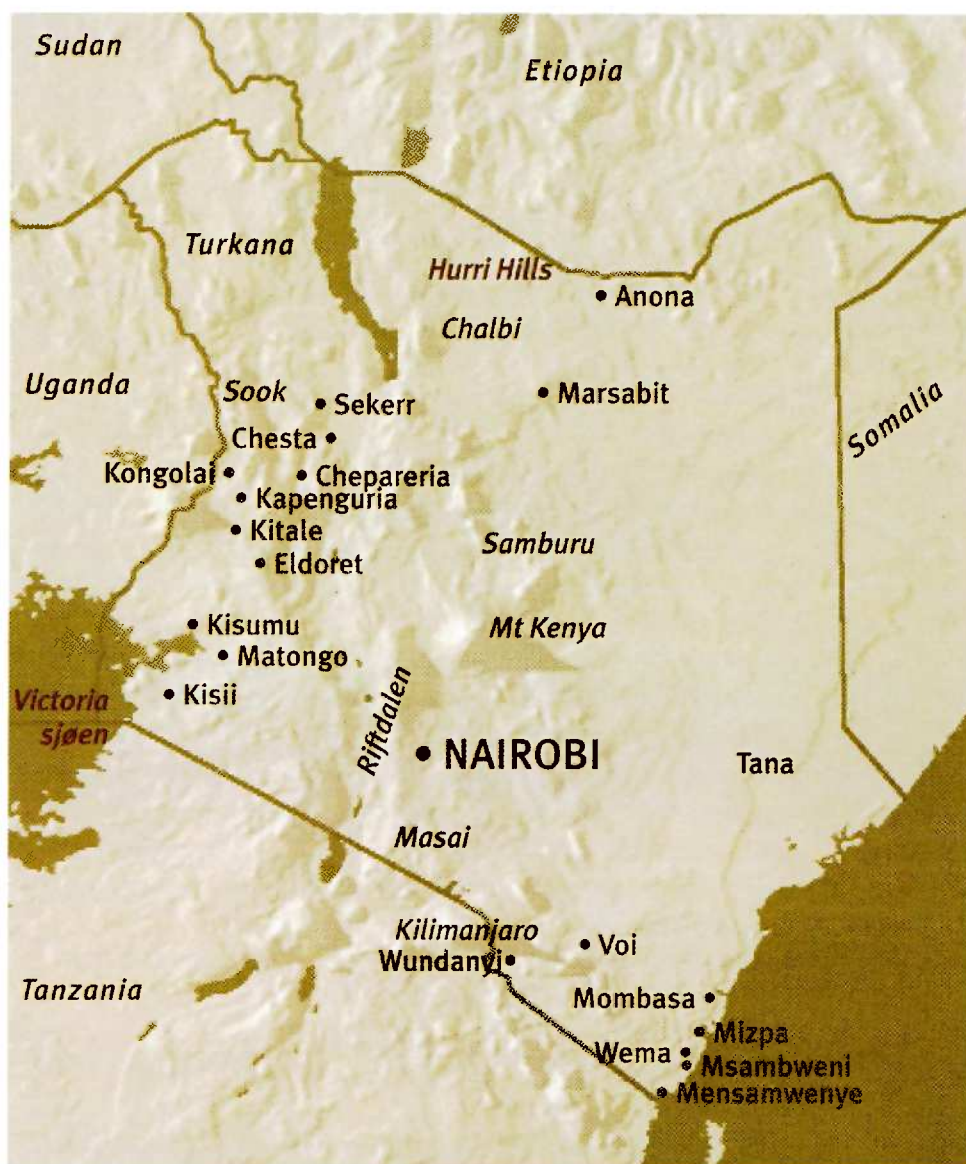
There is a gate that stands ajar  
 And through its portals gleaming  
 A radiance from the cross afar,  
 The Saviour's love revealing.  
 O, depth of mercy! can it be  
 That gate was left ajar for me,  
 For me, .. for me ? ..  
 Was left ajar for me?

Det finns en port, som öppen står  
 Till Kristi nåderike,  
 Och från hans kors ett budskap går  
 Om kärlek utan like.  
 O djup av nåd, min Gud, hos dig,  
 Att porten öppen står för mig,  
 För mig, för mig,  
 Står öppen ock för mig!

<sup>1</sup> The first stanza of this hymn is quoted in four different versions: Kisii/Ekegusii: *Ogotera Kw'Egekristo*, 34 (the text is not identical with that found in the first edition of the

hymn book, *Ogotera Gw'Ekelutheri*) – Swahili/Kiswahili: *Tenzi za Rohoni*, 121 (it is not found in *Nyimbo za Kikristo* or *Mwimbieni Bwana*) – the English original (*Sankey's Sa-*

*cred Songs and Solos*, 372) – Swedish: *Lova Herren* (the SLM song book), 314



Map of Kenya, showing areas where NLM missionaries have been working  
 Map, courtesy of Lunde forlag (taken from Tolo: *Såtid, vekst og modning*, p. 190)

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## A door opened by the Lord

The history of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya

IN FEBR. 1939, SHORTLY BEFORE WORLD WAR II, two delegates from Swedish Lutheran Mission (*Missionssällskapet Bibeltrogna Vänner*) came to East Africa and made an agreement with the community at Itierio, close to Kisii town in South Western Kenya, to initiate a mission work there.

Because of the war, the first missionaries came to Itierio in early 1948.

Out of this pioneer ministry a small Church grew, the *Lutheran Church of Kenya*, which had a few thousand members and two national pastors when it became independent in 1963. Since then the Church has grown rapidly and is now found in many parts of the country. It is well known over the world as the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya*. It has appr. 100 000 members, four bishops, more than one hundred pastors and several hundred congregations. It is led by the Presiding Bishop Dr. Walter Obare.

The author, Rev. Dr. Rune Imberg, tries to answer the following questions:

- How come that Swedish Lutheran Mission decided to start a new mission field in Kenya?
- How has the work developed over the years, from a tiny mission work to an independent Church with four dioceses?
- What are the important decisions and deliberations which have influenced the development of ELCK?

Dr. Imberg has especially tried to trace the visions which have influenced the development of ELCK, concentrating on the development up to 1968.

The history of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya is a witness to the greatness of God, showing how he is leading his people, often in surprising ways, and how he has blessed his Church in Africa and Kenya.

The book is based on extensive research in archives and libraries, especially in Kenya and Sweden. It is illustrated with some maps and more than one hundred photos, many of them unique.

The author, Rev. Dr. Rune Imberg, worked as a missionary in Kenya (1990–1996) together with his wife Katrina, teaching at Matongo Lutheran Theological College, from 1992 as Principal. He and his wife have seven children.

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